



# ANNUAL REPORT 2016

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



South Carolina's future is in our hands. As we shift to an increasingly global marketplace, it has never been more important that we position The Palmetto State for success and prosperity in the decades to come – which is why the years of early childhood matter so much. The data suggest that high-quality early childhood education programs produce long-lasting improvements in:

- academic achievement and attainment
- behavioral and emotional competence
- child maltreatment
- health
- delinquency and crime
- social welfare program use, and
- workplace success.

These benefits are not just realized by individual participants, but by South Carolina taxpayers, whose resources are channeled away from costly social service, criminal justice and remediation costs. Put simply, early childhood is a smart investment.

2016 has been an important year for SC First Steps, with substantial improvements in BabyNet performance, the initiation of Early Head Start services to 254 low-income infants and toddlers in 12 SC counties, the continued expansion of the First Steps 4K program and the addition of both technical assistance resources and new program funding for the agency's 46 local, non-profit First Steps Partnerships. With the support of the SC General Assembly we've deployed new resources to local partnerships statewide, expanding their offerings in home visitation, child care quality enhancement and more. This year also marked the 10th anniversary of the First Steps 4K program, which now operates in 206 private, community- and faith-based classrooms statewide. Finally, we've seen dramatic improvements in BabyNet service delivery and been proud to expand Early Head Start to 254 low-income infants and toddlers in 12 South Carolina counties.

As you review the work of First Steps over the pages to come, I invite you to reflect on the things YOU can do to support the school readiness of our state's children. The long term prosperity of our state and its children depends on our efforts.

Ken Wingate  
Chairman  
SC First Steps Board of Trustees

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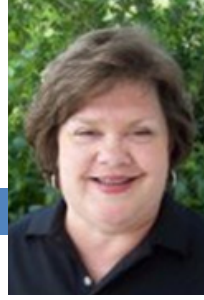
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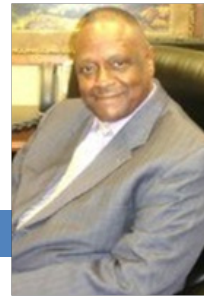
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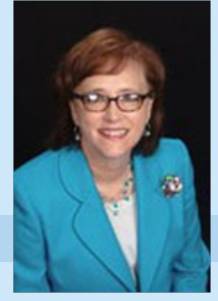


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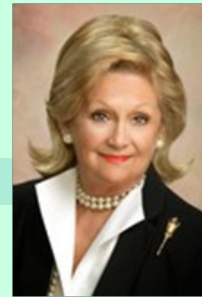
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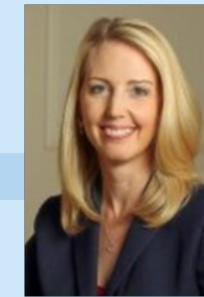
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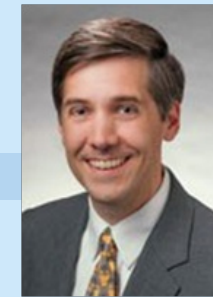
Dr. Beverly Buscemi  
DDSN



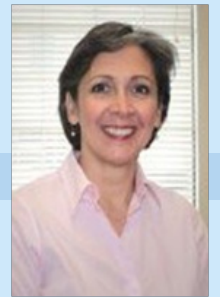
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## ABOUT FIRST STEPS

As the state's comprehensive school readiness initiative, SC First Steps helps parents prepare their young children for school and life success.

### Why We Need to Start Early

Investing in strong early learning experiences for kids makes good sense. We know from brain research that 90% of the brain's full potential is formed by age four. We have a great opportunity to help families and caregivers during this critical window. Studies show that positive early experiences for young children help shape their long-term success, while also saving taxpayer dollars in long-term education and social impact costs.

### How First Steps Can Help

In each of South Carolina's 46 counties, First Steps expands early learning services available for young children, their families, and caregivers. These services fall in six important areas:



### How You Can Find Us

Each county is served by a local First Steps Partnership, whose local board of directors and staff are in place to meet the school readiness needs of the community. First Steps provides funding and technical assistance to the state's network of independent, non-profit First Steps Local Partnerships so that services are provided to children and families who need them by a convening resource that knows each community intimately.

According to a recent evaluation by Compass Evaluation & Research, through this network "First Steps often and in many ways reaches beyond a circle of agencies and administrators to engage local community stakeholders such as parents, educators, and the Community of Faith in investing in early childhood, with investments occurring on the family, caregiver, and neighborhood level. It is these investments that often make the difference for at-risk and high-need children, as these children often require attention and support from multiple sources."

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*Compass Evaluation and Research  
2014 Evaluation*



*"Disadvantaged children enter school lagging behind their more advantaged peers in terms of the knowledge and social competencies that are widely recognized as enabling children to perform at even the most basic level. Substantial gaps are evident for disadvantaged children in measures of reading and mathematics proficiency, in prosocial behaviors and behavior problems, and in readiness to learn. For example, although 18 percent of children overall are not familiar with basic conventions of print or writing (e.g., knowing that English is read from left to right and top to bottom, or where a story ends), that fraction is 32 percent for children whose mothers have less than a high school education but only 8 percent for children whose mothers have a college degree or higher. Other risk factors include being in a single-parent family, a family that has received welfare, or a family that does not speak English at home."*

*Children at Risk: Consequences for School Readiness and Beyond*  
Rand Corporation, 2005

A landmark analysis by Dr. Baron Holmes of the SC Budget and Control Board explored the attributes of South Carolina children experiencing school failure by the 3rd grade (those children scoring in the Below-Basic category of the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test or who had been retained at least once).

Dr. Holmes' findings suggest that a handful of predisposing risk factors are associated with particularly high rates of early school failure. Dr. Holmes' work continues to assist First Steps as the agency works to target South Carolina's at-risk children.

SC Children Most at Risk of Early School Failure

Risk Factor	Percentage Failing by 3rd Grade	SC Children (Birth – 6) Possessing Risk Factor	
Abuse, Neglect, Foster Care	53%	10,171	3%
Very Low Birth Weight (<3.3 lbs)	52%	7,170	2.11%
Low Maternal Education (< 12th)	48%	81,852	24.1%
T.A.N.F. (50% Federal Poverty)	45%	28,690	8.4%
Low Birth Weight (3.3-4.4 lbs)	43%	9,390	2.77%
Teen Mother (<18)	43%	15,618	4.6%
Food Stamps (130% Federal Poverty)	42%	67,897	20%
Teenage Mother (18- 20)	37%	29,946	8.83%
Low Birth Weight (4.4-5.5lbs)	36%	18,780	5.53%

Dr. Baron Holmes, 2007

# MEASURING OUTCOMES

Each of the six color blocks of the First Steps logo represents a core area of service, outlining our comprehensive strategy to prepare children for long-term school success. With measurable outcomes across each of its six school readiness strategy areas, First Steps is getting results.



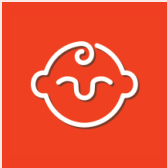
## Healthy Start

We begin with a focus on providing a healthy start to life. This includes prenatal and post-partum services for both mother and baby. In 2007, First Steps collaborated with key philanthropic and agency partners to bring *Nurse-Family Partnership* to SC having a significant impact on reducing premature births and Medicaid costs.



## Family Strengthening

Our home visitation strategies, such as *Parents as Teachers*, *Parent-Child Home* and *Early Steps to School Success*, are helping parents understand their responsibilities to care for and be positive models for their children. As a result of First Steps’ intervention and parenting support, 66% of clients initially assessed at “low” levels of parenting have achieved moderate or high levels of parenting skill.



## Early Intervention

According to recent federal evaluations, outcomes for clients participating in BabyNet early intervention programs are above national averages. BabyNet matches the special needs of infants and toddlers who have disabilities and/or developmental delays with customized, community-based resources.



## Quality Childcare

Quality childcare starts with quality childcare providers. Our quality enhancement and training strategies lead to improved teacher-student interaction, which research shows has a significant impact on a child’s development and success in school.



## Early Education

Private-public partnerships through First Steps 4K have led to significant cost efficiencies in the delivery of publicly-funded 4K. One recent analysis suggests First Steps is achieving comparable results, without the need for costly capital construction, for 80 cents on the dollar.



## School Transition

Each of the corresponding blocks of services leads ultimately to the goal of transitioning children successfully to school. Programs like *Countdown to Kindergarten* and *From Day One to Grade One* are ultimately preparing children for school success.





# HEALTHY START

School readiness starts with healthy children. First Steps is the state sponsor of Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), an evidence-based home visitation program matching nurse home visitors with first-time, low-income mothers. A recent birth-outcome analysis conducted by DHEC's Bureau of Maternal Child Health showed low-income mothers receiving this evidence-based nurse home visitation program were:

- 63% less likely to require admission to a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)
- Half as likely to be born pre-term (less than 37 weeks)
- Half as likely to be born at a low birth weight

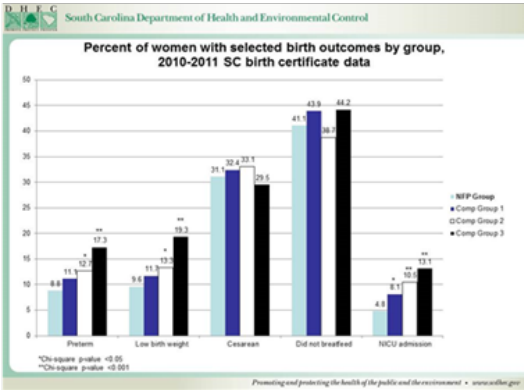
Independent research suggests that 52% of SC children born at an extremely low birth weight fall into one or more categories of school failure (retention, achievement) by the third grade, making preventative programs such as NFP critical to improving early school success. Brought to South Carolina by SC First Steps and The Duke Endowment in 2008, Nurse Family Partnership has a large collaborative footprint in 2016, serving South Carolina mothers in 30 counties from nine regionally-based hubs.

Since inception, South Carolina NFP has:

- Served more than 3,200 low-income mothers and their babies
- Delivered more than 75,000 nurse home visits
- Grown from an original client capacity of 600 to almost 1,200 slots.

In partnership with the SC Department of Health and Human Services, Nurse-Family Partnership recently launched the nation's first Pay for Success initiative focused on improving health outcomes for mothers and children living in poverty. The project will expand Nurse-Family Partnership's services to an additional 3,200 first-time, low-income mothers across the state. The South Carolina Pay for Success initiative mobilizes \$30 million to expand Nurse-Family Partnership's evidence-based services. Philanthropic funders have committed \$17 million to the project. Medicaid will fund approximately \$13 million via a 1915(b) Medicaid Waiver, awarded to the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The philanthropic funders include:

- BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation (\$3.5 million)
- The Duke Endowment (\$8 million)
- The Boeing Company (\$800,000)
- Greenville County First Steps (\$700,000)
- Laura and John Arnold Foundation (\$491,000)
- Consortium of private funders (\$4 million)



### Conclusions

- NFP participants differ substantially in terms of risk factors compared to potentially eligible non-participants, even in the same geographic areas.  
– DHEC sites, live births in 2010-2011
- After accounting for these differences, these NFP participants have significantly lower prevalence of LBW, PTB, and NICU admissions.

## EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF NFP OUTCOMES: Birth Outcomes for SC NFP Clients Delivering Live Births in 2010-2011 (SC DHEC, Maternal Child Health Bureau – February 2013)

- NFP Group
- Comparison Group 1: All Medicaid Births
- Comparison Group 2: Medicaid Births at Hospitals Where NFP Clients Delivered
- Comparison Group 3: Medicaid Births at Hospitals Where NFP Clients Delivered  
–with Clients Matched on Mother’s Race, Mother’s Education and WIC Status.

Program Model	2015-2016
Nurse-Family Partnership	1035 mothers/babies
Nurses paired with first-time mothers beginning during the second trimester of pregnancy and extending to the child’s second birthday; training, support and referral.	9 sites(Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson, Columbia, Greenwood, Florence, Orangeburg, Conway, and Charleston) serving 30 counties: Abbeville, Anderson, Barnwell, Berkeley, Charleston, Cherokee, Chesterfield, Colleton, Darlington, Dillon, Dorchester, Edgefield, Florence, Georgetown, Greenville, Greenwood, Horry, Laurens, Lexington, Marion, Marlboro, McCormick, Oconee, Orangeburg, Pickens, Richland, Saluda, Spartanburg, Union, and Williamsburg.
	100% of NFP clients are first-time, low-income mothers eligible for Medicaid.





## FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Families are a child's first and best teachers. First Steps supports parents statewide as they prepare their children for school success. As the state sponsor of *Parents as Teachers*, South Carolina's largest evidence-based parent education program, the state office of First Steps serves as Parents and Teachers' statewide technical assistance structure at no cost to participating schools or communities.

In addition, First Steps underwrites additional parenting models including *Parent-Child Home* and *Early Steps to School Success*. Since inception, First Steps has delivered more than half a million parent education home visits to help parents prepare children for school.



First Steps' *Parents as Teachers Program* has been twice honored as a finalist for the *WhatWorksSC Award* by The Riley Institute and SC Future Minds.

- In 2007, the SC First Steps Board of Trustees created comprehensive, statewide program fidelity standards that often exceed those of the national, evidence-based models on which they are based.

- Evaluation Notes Significant Improvements in Parenting: In a recent external evaluation, 66% of parents who initially scored at a low level of parenting skill improved their abilities to moderate or high levels after participation in a First Steps parent education program. (HighScope, Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale Analysis, 2010)
- Evaluation Notes Significant Improvements in Interactive Literacy: Both parents and children participating in First Steps family strengthening programs demonstrate improvements in early literacy, with parents increasing their use/demonstration of key early literacy strategies by 32% (pre to post) and children increasing their own demonstration of these behaviors by 33%. (HighScope, Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory Analysis, 2010)



"Under First Steps' leadership, Parents as Teachers in South Carolina has set the national example in fidelity and accountability. We hold you up to other states doing home visitation as an example of how it can be done right."

Scott Hippert, CEO,  
Parents as Teachers National Office

Home Visitation Includes:

- Personal Visits with Families
- Child Developmental Screening & Assessment
- Community Resource & Referral





Program Model	FY2016
<p><b>Parents as Teachers (PAT)</b>  Parent mentor trained to enhance effective parent-child interaction, developmental parenting skills, and literacy for children 0-5. Developmental screenings, validated curriculum, and assessment.</p>	<p>1,212 families  1,455 children  23,253 visits  31 counties</p> <p>94.5% of First Steps' Parents as Teachers clients possess two or more identified readiness risk factors. 95% of these clients qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or SNAP benefits or for free school lunches by virtue of a family income at or below 130% of the federal poverty definition. 50% of these children live in a single parent household and 36% have been born to mothers with less than a high school diploma. 18% reside with a teenage custodial parent and 11% were born at a low birth weight.</p>
<p><b>Parent-Child Home (PCH)</b>  Parent mentor trained to support effective early literacy behaviors in children ages 0-5</p>	<p>131 families  130 children  6,707 visits  3 counties</p> <p>86% of First Steps' Parent-Child Home clients possess two or more identified readiness risk factors. 93% of these clients qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or SNAP benefits or for free school lunches by virtue of a family income at or below 130% of the federal poverty definition. 47% of these children live in a single parent household and 19% have been born to mothers with less than a high school diploma. 9% reside with a teenage custodial parent and 21% were born at a low birth weight. 11% reside with a teenage custodial parent and 18% were born at a low birth weight.</p>

<p><b>Save the Children</b>  <i>Early Steps to School Success</i>  Community and school tied to home visitor and literacy activities; assessment and mentoring, group meetings augment program.</p>	<p>158 families  177 children  1,857 visits  4 counties</p> <p>91% of First Steps' Early Steps to School Success clients possess two or more identified readiness risk factors. 91% of these clients qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or SNAP benefits or for free school lunches by virtue of a family income at or below 130% of the federal poverty definition. 50% of these children live in a single parent household and 19% have been born to mothers with less than a high school diploma. 16% reside with a teenage custodial parent and 16% were born at a low birth weight.</p>
<p><b>Parent Training and Literacy Strategies:</b></p> <p><b>Literacy Support/Book Distribution Strategies</b> (<i>Raising a Reader, Reach Out and Read, Dolly Parton Imagination Library, and Library-Based Programs</i>)</p>	<p>2129 children  1,342 families  1,872 hours of training provided  10 counties</p> <p>9,174 children  6,959 families  19 counties  Local partnerships distributed more than 220,000 books to children 0-5 during FY16</p>





*“One of the benefits of [the statewide collaboration] is that you will have multiple state agencies that can touch a child. In many cases, this is not redundant. This is partnering and touching the different pieces of that child’s life, to have the maximum impact in that child’s life, and to maximize the state dollars that are associated with those services so you get the most impact for those dollar spent.”*

Dr. Beverly Buscemi, SC DDSN

## EARLY INTERVENTION

Finding and serving our state’s children with developmental delays as early as possible can reduce later remediation and can help children prepare for school success along with their typically developing peers. South Carolina’s BabyNet Early Intervention System – an interagency partnership between First Steps, the SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, the SC School for the Deaf and the Blind, the SC Department of Health and Human Services, and hundreds of private education, therapy, and service coordination vendors statewide - provides special education services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays. The program’s outcomes consistently meet or exceed national averages on measures of key school readiness skills.



BABYNET OUTCOME SUMMARY STATEMENTS (FFY13-14)	Outcome 1: Development of positive social emotional and relationship skills.	Outcome 2: Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills.	Outcome 3: Use of appropriate behavior to meet needs.
1. Of those children who entered the program below age expectations in [outcome], the percent that substantially increased their rate of growth in [outcome] by the time they exited.	78%	81%	82.0%
2. Percent of children who were functioning within age expectations in [outcome], by the time they exited.	54%	50%	52%

**BABYNET PARENTS SPEAK:**

“Our BabyNet service provider is very friendly. She listens, and seems to care about my family. I enjoy when she comes out. She gives me new ideas of things to try to help my son learn, and she helped us enroll in the ABC Child Care program and speech therapy.”

“BabyNet has played an important role in getting my preemie baby caught up.”

“I absolutely love our BabyNet therapist. She has shown that she cares about my son and his future. She has been a great fit for our family and I look forward to the rest of her visits with my son and watching his progress.”

**During FY16**

- First Steps’ local BabyNet intake offices received and processed 10,260 referrals statewide.
- Of these referrals, 45% (or 4,693) continued to formal eligibility determination.
- Among these, 83% (or 3,897) were found eligible and 17% (or 796) were found ineligible.







QUALITY CHILDCARE

Two-thirds of SC mothers with young children depend on child care providers to help care for their children during the work day. Since a child’s brain is forming rapidly during these early years, child care teachers are significant partners to families in helping children develop to be successful in school.

According to an independent analysis by the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, child care providers participating in First Steps’ quality improvement programs made statistically significant gains in each of seven domains quality measured.

During FY16, First Steps:

- Provided intensive quality-enhancement programming in 107 SC child care settings, enrolling 6,105 children. Centers selected for participation in First Steps’ quality enhancement programs are identified via competitive application with priority to providers:
  - Participating in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program and documenting that at least 30% of enrolled students qualify for free meals/ snacks (130% of federal poverty), - OR –
  - Located within the school attendance zone of (and/or enrolling primarily children attending) an individual elementary school rated “Below Average” or “At Risk” (Unsatisfactory) during the preceding three-year period, - OR –
  - In which 10% or more of enrolled students are ABC voucher recipients.
  - Participating in a publicly-funding early care and education program (such as First Steps 4K). \*Child-level demographic data is not collected for quality enhancement strategies.
- Made 2,632 on-site, provider visits.
- Provided 1,100 accredited child care training hours to 3,887 child care teachers, directors and staff.
- Provided preschool scholarships to 531 children, in 132 qualified private settings. Of these children, 99% possessed two or more identified school readiness risk factors, with 52% qualifying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits by virtue of a family income at or below 50% of federal poverty, 24% living with a teenage custodial parent, 19% born to a mother than less than a high school diploma.

To enhance school readiness outcomes, First Steps works with partners in support of QUALITY CHILD CARE at state and local levels.

Table 35. Pre and Post Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) Scores for Child Care Centers Participating in First Steps Child Care Quality Enhancement

ECERS Scale		Length of Participation (Months)											
		Overall				3 – 5				6 – 12 s			
		Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N
Overall Score	Pre	3.74	146	3.98	9	3.90	69	3.55	68				
	Post	4.55		4.91		4.68		4.38					
		**		*		**		**					
Space and Furnishings	Pre	3.84	125	3.92	9	4.08	61	3.57	55				
	Post	4.67		4.68		4.77		4.56					
		**		†		**		**					
Personal Care Routines	Pre	3.50	124	3.31	8	3.37	61	3.66	55				
	Post	4.00		4.68		3.95		3.95					
		**		*		**		—					
Language- Reasoning	Pre	3.97	124	4.24	9	4.16	60	3.72	55				
	Post	4.77		4.72		4.93		4.62					
		**		—		**		**					
Activities	Pre	3.06	125	3.70	9	3.21	61	2.79	55				
	Post	4.21		4.68		4.40		3.93					
		**		*		**		**					
Interaction	Pre	4.64	125	4.96	9	4.69	61	4.54	55				
	Post	5.26		5.37		5.22		5.29					
		**		—		*		**					
Program Structure	Pre	3.93	125	4.76	9	4.28	61	3.41	55				
	Post	4.70		5.44		4.97		4.27					
		**		—		**		**					
Parents and Staff	Pre	4.67	66	5.0	4	4.71	37	4.57	25				
	Post	5.16		5.9		5.07		5.18					
		**		—		*		*					

Note. \*\*, p < .01; \*, p < .05; †, .05 > p > .10; —, p > .10

Table 36 highlights ITERS gains overall and by length of time between pre and post assessments. Overall, pre-test scores were quite low and post-test gain on their overall scores was significant. Participants of 6 months or more saw significant gains in all but one scale (Language-Reasoning greater than 12 months).

- Further Steps to School Readiness
- HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2010

Intensive Quality Enhancement Strategies	
14	Counties
104	Centers Enrolling 6,105 children
2,632	Technical Assistance Visits Completed
5,583	Technical Assistance Visit Hours
12.14%	Average Improvement in Center Quality (Measured Pre -Post using the Environmental Rating Scales)







## EARLY EDUCATION

Quality prekindergarten can improve a child's success in school, particularly for low-income or disadvantaged students.

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness partners with high-quality private, community- and faith-based preschools to offer full-day four-year-old kindergarten for families in eligible counties. Approved programs focus on developmental and learning supports that children must have in order to be ready for school, incorporate research-based curricula, ongoing assessment, and parenting education.

Permanently codified in June 2014 after eight years as a pilot program, the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) utilizes a public-private delivery model to expand access to 4K. Families can choose a public school or a community-based program for their eligible children.

Eligible children must be four on or before September 1, reside in one of 64 specified school districts, and qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch or Medicaid. CERDEP is jointly administered by SC First Steps (private and community-based schools) and the SC Department of Education (public schools).

Since the creation of the public-private 4K pilot in 2006-2007, First Steps has served more than 11,500 four-year-olds in private, community- and faith-based preschool settings.

### Public-Private 4K Works for South Carolina Families:

A 2015 analysis by the Education Oversight Committee suggests that students participating in the **state's public-private 4K** program outperformed a matched control group in Mathematics and English Language Arts in every year examined. **Enrollment in 4K closed 43.8% of the study's measured 6th grade Language Arts achievement gap**, suggesting significant and lasting benefits of participation.

- During August and September of 2016, more than 540 public and private preschool teachers, assistants and administrators attended First Steps in Columbia, receiving in-depth professional development on research-based curriculum, early literacy and social-emotional development. During FY17 alone, First Steps will provide more than 26,000 cumulative training hours to the state's private 4K Workforce.



*"It takes all of us — those in public agencies, our private partnerships, the faith community, the business community, all of us — working together, because, quite honestly, educators cannot do this all by themselves. And we can't do it in just a regular school day. Once a child turns four, we have to have after school*

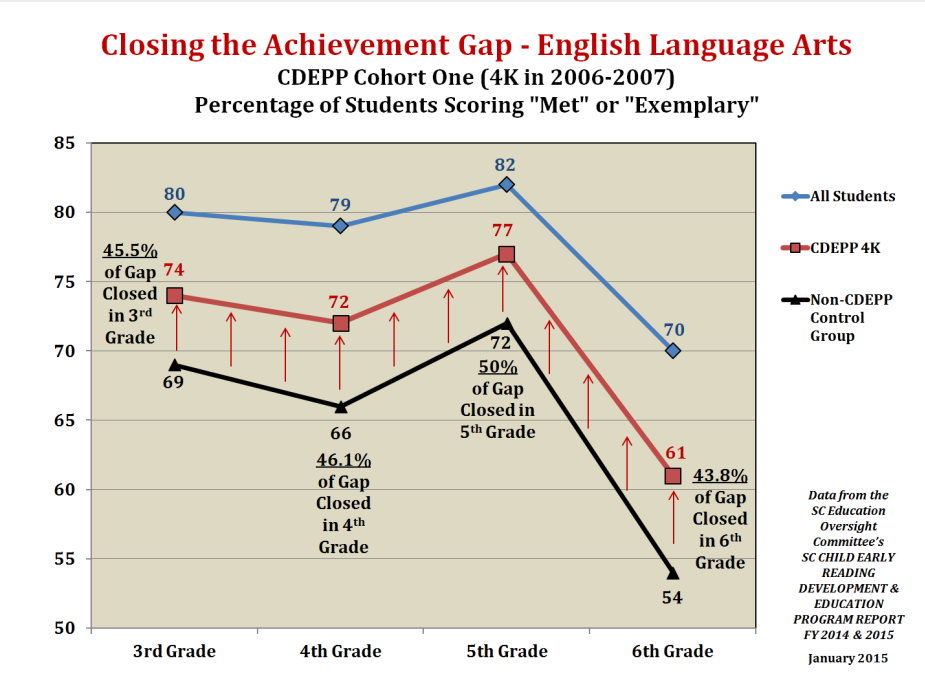
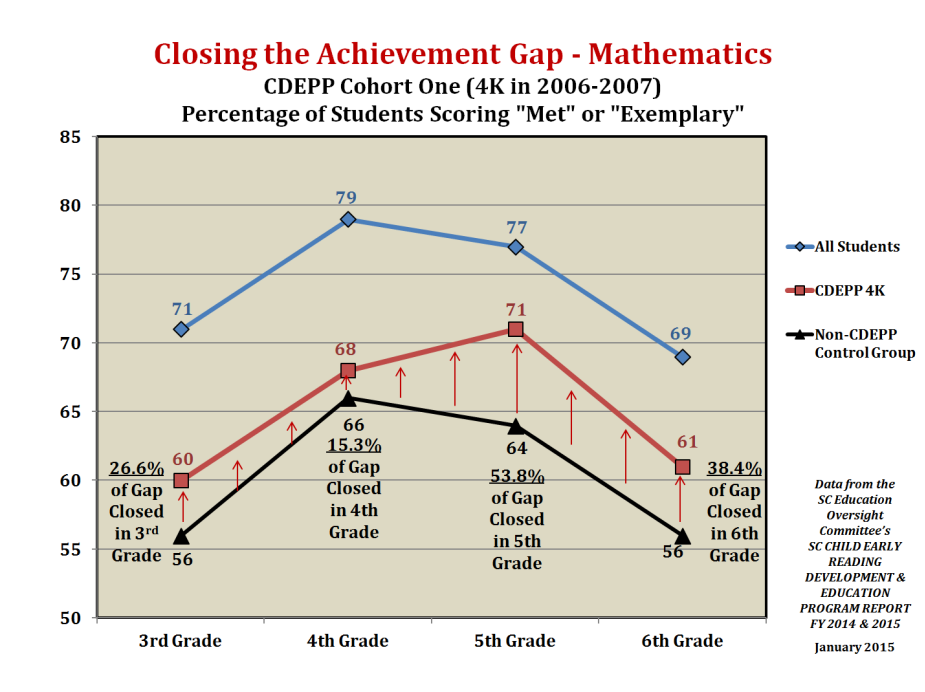
*care and summer learning opportunities for those children who are at-risk. And believe you me, it makes success much easier if those at-risk children have had a strong early childhood development program. "*

State Superintendent of Education  
Molly Spearman



- First Steps’ private 4K students are receiving comparable learning experiences for 20% less cost to taxpayers (\$4,690 vs. \$5,812 per child). Funds provided for private 4K service provision are reinvested in South Carolina’s economy, benefiting small, often minority-owned businesses who return a portion of this investment back to the state.
- First Steps ensures quality and accountability by making announced and unannounced monitoring visits approximately twice monthly, with approximately 3,200 individual site visits completed during FY16. Participation in First Steps’ 4K program, in combination with other quality supports, has positively influenced overall center quality for all children
- First Steps is leveraging the availability of existing space in private child care centers, with no capital costs to taxpayers.
- 100% of First Steps’ 4K students qualify for either free/reduced lunch or Medicaid.
- All First Steps 4K students participate in pre- and post-assessment. Through grant funding from the SC Department of Social Services, ETV and Sprint, all First Steps 4K classrooms are equipped to complete the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment online, documenting student learning throughout the year and accessing specialized instructional supports.

First Steps’ 4K Impact:		
PROGRAM YEAR	# OF CHILDREN	# OF PROVIDERS
2006-07 (FY 07)	309	40
2007-08 (FY 08)	482	48
2008-09 (FY 09)	459	40
2009-10 (FY 10)	524	39
2010-11 (FY 11)	549	36
2011-12 (FY 12)	577	43
2012-13 (FY 13)	601	42
2013-14 (FY 14)	1,402	93
2014-15 (FY 15)	1,916	151
2015-16 (FY16)	2,191	179
2016-17 (FY 17 - Projected)	2,500	188
Total since FY07		Students Served 11,510





## SCHOOL TRANSITION

In 2003, SC communities reported a lack of school transition services for children. In response, First Steps collaborated with local, state and national partners to create **Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK)**. This home visitation program matches families of high-risk rising kindergartners with their upcoming 5K teachers during the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with each family, centered on classroom and curriculum expectations.

- In 2009 the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation completed an external review of Countdown to Kindergarten, noting the strategy's potential to powerfully shape both subsequent interaction and classroom practice. Researchers noted that:
- “Over 75% of home visitors reported making **some or a great deal of change in their instruction, experiences, practices, activities on the first day of school** and the **methods by which they communicate with parents** as a direct result of their CTK experience.”
- “All participants, whether home visitor or parents, report the **significant impact this strategy has on professional practice, parent-teacher relationships, and parent participation in and child attitudes toward kindergarten.**” (Further Steps to School Readiness- HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2010)
- In a 2016 teacher survey, **75% of participating teachers reported that Countdown to Kindergarten parents were as or more involved than non-participating parents.**

*In 2007, First Steps' Countdown to Kindergarten program was recognized as a promising state practice by the National Governor's Association in their report, Building the Foundation for Bright Futures.*

*“Countdown is the greatest thing that's ever happened to children in South Carolina. The relationships built over the summer between the teacher and families created a trust and support that has helped the children blossom in kindergarten. The only way to break the cycle is to model for parents how effectively they can work with their own children through reading and playing and learning with hands on materials.”*

*-Gayle Troutman, Kindergarten Teacher, Burnside Elementary School*



During the summer of 2016, First Steps served **1,081 children, 1,064 families, and delivered 6,321 Countdown to Kindergarten home visits**. 83% of these children possessed two or more identified school readiness risk factors, with 80% of these children qualifying for SNAP or free school lunches by virtue of a family income at or below 130% of federal poverty, 8% living in a teen parent household, 16% born to a mother with less than a high school diploma, and 12% with an identified developmental delay.

First Steps’ School Transition Impact:  
11,416 families served since 2004  
68,021 teacher visits since 2004



**A Note on KIDS COUNT Data from  
Sue Williams of Children’s Trust of South Carolina**

Children’s Trust of South Carolina, the statewide organization working to prevent child abuse, neglect and injuries, annually releases local KIDS COUNT data profiles that rank counties on indicators of child well-being in South Carolina. These profiles provide a data-rich snapshot of life for children in each of the Palmetto State’s 46 counties and highlight deficits, which if addressed, could significantly improve future opportunities for children in those communities. This data, which helps to determine the grant allocations of local First Steps partnerships as part of First Steps’ state funding formula, is also excerpted in the county profiles to follow.

When children meet educational milestones and live in economically stable homes and supportive communities, they are more likely to grow into productive, contributing citizens. Currently, too many of South Carolina’s children live in environments that put them at risk for negative outcomes, including child abuse and neglect.

South Carolina’s Top 10 KIDS COUNT counties in 2016 (indicating the best conditions for children) were York, Dorchester, Lexington, Greenville, Calhoun, Pickens, Beaufort, Berkeley, Richland and Oconee. Allendale County ranked No. 46, trailing Marion, Lee, Dillon and Marlboro counties in the bottom five.

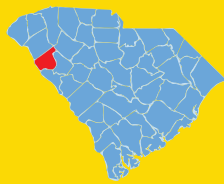
The county profiles are produced by Children’s Trust in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) and the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office. The data sheets are modeled after the AECF’s KIDS COUNT state and national profiles using four domains (economic well-being, education, health, and family and community) with four indicators in each domain for a total of 16 indicators.

The complete county data and profile sheets can be found at [scChildren.org/KidsCount](http://scChildren.org/KidsCount).



Sue Williams, Chief Executive Officer for Children’s Trust of South Carolina, sits on the First Steps Board of Trustees. Sue leads South Carolina’s agency working to prevent child abuse, neglect and injury. As an integral part of that mission, Children’s Trust is the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s KIDS COUNT grantee for the state, providing high quality data and reports on South Carolina’s children and families. Using these county profiles, communities can make informed decisions to build greater opportunities for children and families.





## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Abbeville County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,344
Children In Poverty	26.4%	29.8%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	12.6%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	14.9%

• Since inception, Abbeville County First Steps has leveraged \$1,066,362 from sources outside of state government. **That's \$.34 for every state dollar received.**

• Served more than 55 parents in parenting programs during FY16.

• Made connections for **100% of families served** to needed supports such as adult education, financial counseling, housing assistance, employment referrals, etc.

• Achieved pre-to-post gains in parenting behaviors and literacy skills among at-risk families.

• Total Children Served in FY16: 453

Abbeville County First Steps  
1402C Highway 72 West  
Greenwood, SC 29649  
Phone: 864-388-4102  
Fax: 864-388-4103

Board Chair: Daniel Crawford

[www.acfirststeps.org](http://www.acfirststeps.org)

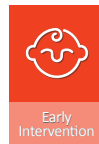
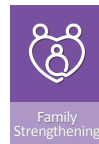
### Abbeville County First Steps Angela Pruitt Executive Director



Our County Partnership has had a great year in 2016. Abbeville and Greenwood County First Steps starting sharing office space in March 2011, and this Joint County Partnership has continued into 2016. By sharing administrative and programmatic resources across county lines, this joint venture has created a significant cost saving which can provide more for program services to children and families.

We have continued to have great relationships with the Department of Social Services and the Guardian Ad Litem Programs. The Real Fathers Are Dads Fatherhood Initiative continues to grow and gain community support with participants, civic organizations, churches, and businesses. We also have a great relationship with The Social Change Initiative to ensure we have additional parenting services for our families. We have provided services to over 450 participants since the inception in 2008. The Fatherhood Initiative and Parents as Teachers Program work jointly to include the entire family. The father has been the missing component for many years with our programs, and we have found the missing component. By using the holistic approach and working with the entire family, we are starting to see change happen. Other agencies and partners in our community are starting to see change and want to be a part of this initiative.

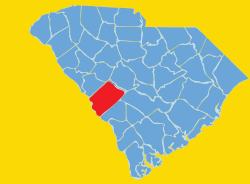
We also continue to partner with Lander University and Erskine College's Education Department to provide Early Childhood Conferences each year. We were able to provide quality child care trainings with approved Certified Trainers to 8 facilities, and 57 staff members serving more than 402 children. Community Partnerships are continuing to expand to provide services to the most at risk children in Abbeville County



### Programs Available to Abbeville County

#### Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Fatherhood Initiative  
Childcare Training  
BabyNet



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Aiken County
Children Under Five	289,990	9,350
Children In Poverty	26.4	28.4%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	21.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	17.0%

• Since inception, Aiken County First Steps has leveraged \$2,363,771 from sources outside of state government. **That's \$.32 for every state dollar received.**

• **340.18 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 25 families in our Parents as Teachers Program.

• **Childcare professionals received 204.75 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.

• Improved parenting practices through **12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**

• Total Children Served in FY16: 1,409

Aiken County First Steps  
P.O. Box 2091  
Aiken, SC 29802  
Phone: 803-663-5604  
Fax: 803-663-0069

Board Chairman: Shirley von Beck

Svonbeck2013@gmail.com  
aiken1stepsed@bellsouth.net

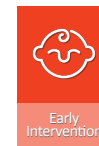
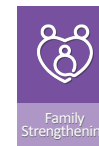
### Aiken County First Steps Marcia L. Nash, M.ED. Executive Director



The American Enterprise Institute wrote an article in April 2016 entitled "Does Pre-K Work"? The Research on Ten Early Childhood Programs-and What it Tells Us". Two important early childhood policies emerged from this report, one which provides the excessive force we need to continue our mission of getting Aiken County's children healthy and ready for school. It states: "To move the early childhood field forward, we must enhance high-quality child care and voluntary home visiting for disadvantaged children".

By the numbers, Aiken County exceeds the State average of children living in poverty, 3rd graders below the standard reading level, and births to mothers with less than a high school diploma. Given what we know and witness daily, it makes sense to direct our investments toward high-quality, educational care for disadvantaged children. The ACFS board and staff, parents, child care directors, Parents as Teachers National home visitation program, and our community partners will continue our passionate work of improving outcomes for at-risk children and their families in Aiken County. By enriching the earliest environments-home and child care, providing child care for children whose families meet financial or situational criteria, improving continuity of care, and improving child development outcomes for children, our forward movement will allow the 9,350 children under the age of five in Aiken County a chance to "will what they want" and soar to success within their process.

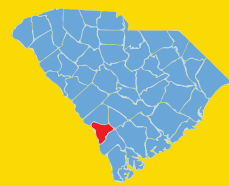
TOGETHER WE CAN!



### Programs Available to Aiken County

#### Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Child Care Quality Enhancement  
Child Care Training  
Child Care Scholarships  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Allendale County
Children Under Five	289,990	493
Children In Poverty	26.4%	48.7%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	58.9%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	31.1%

• Since inception, Allendale County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,017,936** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.35 for every dollar received.**

• Parents as Teachers program provide 150 hours of support and guidance to 20 families

• **Child Care professionals** received 53 hours of child care training from a certified trainer through CCCC

• **Countdown to Kindergarten** program students received all home visits totaling 120 hours

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 40**

Allendale County First Steps  
176 Main Street North  
Allendale, SC 29810  
Phone: 803-584-6000  
Fax: 803-584-7000

Board Chairman: Tom Carter, Jr.

a1steps@yahoo.com

### Allendale County First Steps Patricia Hall Executive Director



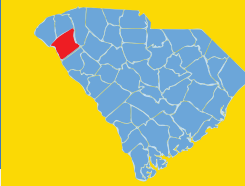
We at Allendale County First Steps - the Board of Directors, Staff and I - take pride in providing our parents access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families.

One of our goals is to provide quality services and support to our partnering child care centers and their staff as well as to children and families who participate in our programs, and we don't take that responsibility lightly. We ensure this happens through having qualified staff to provide mentoring and technical assistance to child care center staff, administering parenting programs, and implementing research-based curriculum and best practice training. Allendale County First Steps Programs was very successful this fiscal year because of our partners and supporters involvement in ensuring that our programs carried out the out the initiatives of the organization. Your continuous support in ensuring that our children arrive at school ready to learn is essential.

On behalf of Allendale County First Steps Partnership, we thank you for your involvement and support in the past and look forward to having your continued support in the future. You are the lifeline of this organization and we thank you.



**Programs Available to Allendale County Families through First Steps**  
Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Anderson County
Children Under Five	289,990	11,589
Children In Poverty	26.4	23.8%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	13.7%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	18.3%

• Since inception, Anderson County First Steps has leveraged **\$4,527,296** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.54 for every dollar received.**

• **Total adults served: 275**

• 100% of Family Literacy clients had 2 or more school readiness risk factors; avg. 3.3

• Clients earned 3 GEDs and 14 High School Diplomas; 12 were promoted to the next grade level

• **Number of Books distributed: 1,217**

• **Total children served: 242**

Anderson County First Steps  
605 N. Main Street  
Anderson, SC 29622  
Phone: 864-222-0410

Board Chairman: Jackie Blakley

1stepsac@bellsouth.net  
www.1stepsac.org

### Anderson County First Steps Paige Wall Executive Director



Anderson County First Steps Partnership is proud of the following milestones it has achieved during the past fifteen years and its "value-add" to the Anderson community. Our mission could not have been accomplished without the passion, dedication, and support of our community partners:

- The Anderson County First Steps Partnership has distributed \$9,256,083 to area providers to support parent and family strengthening programs and services, school transition, 4-K classes for at-risk children; and to improve learning environments through the child care quality enhancement and training programs.

Anderson County First Steps Partnership has increased the quality of services available to children and families, using research and data to improve programs and target the most at-risk children and their families.

- In Anderson County, since 2007-2008, 91 adults have received GEDs and 103 teenage mothers have stayed in school and received their high school diplomas through Family Literacy programs; 761 additional children have had access to four-year-old kindergarten; 234 children and their families have received services through the Countdown to Kindergarten program; 19 child care facilities have improved their learning environments; and 460 families and 331 babies have received over 6,812 home visits in collaboration with the Anderson County Nurse-Family Partnership.

Anderson County First Steps Partnership collaborates with community partners to leverage funds that will benefit Anderson County families.

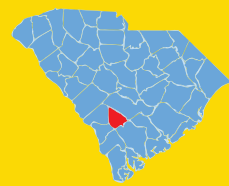
- During the past 15 years, \$4,527,296 has been leveraged to provide additional early education services for the most at-risk children and their families. We have strong partnerships with our local funders and service providers including Anderson School Districts One, Two, Three, Four, and Five who have provided \$126,550 annually in matching funds for Family Literacy services, the United Way of Anderson County, The Duke Endowment and The Children's Trust of South Carolina. Peoples Bank of Iva provides office space and administrative services.

Anderson County First Steps Partnership, working with community partners, has helped to reduce first grade retention.

- In Anderson County, first-grade retention has been reduced by 54.5% since 2001-2002. This has resulted in a cost-savings of \$932,790.



**Programs Available to Anderson County Families through First Steps**  
Family Literacy  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Early Education  
Countdown to Kindergarten



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Bamberg County
Children Under Five	289,990	749
Children In Poverty	26.4%	41%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	33.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	16.9%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
Children's Trust  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- Since inception, Bamberg County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,063,280** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.78 for every dollar received.**
- **346.52 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 19 families in our Parents as Teachers Program.
- **Childcare professionals received 19.75 hours** of training in early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through **12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 20**

Bamberg County First Steps  
Post Office Box 1129  
3788 Faust Street  
Bamberg, SC 29003  
Phone: 803-245-6513  
Fax: 803-245-6523

Board Chairman: Tracy Golden  
pplowden29042@yahoo.com

### Bamberg County First Steps Pauletta Plowden Executive Director



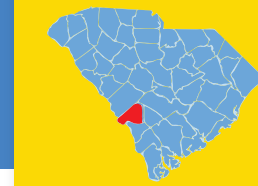
There is an old African proverb that says "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Since its creation, Bamberg County First Steps has been the very embodiment of going there together, bringing parents, childcare providers, schools, health partners, businesses and other non-profits to the table to develop solutions that will forever change the way our children start primary school, by preparing them for success and the real world of work. Research has shown that children who arrive at school ready to learn are more likely to be successful than those children who have ground to make up on their peers during the early elementary years. Do we want: Increased school success, including test scores? Decreased school retention and drop-out rates? A skilled workforce? Raised economic incomes and decreased poverty? If so, the answer is clear, we must invest in early childhood development, especially in the early years between birth and age three years.

To address these important factors, Bamberg County First Steps offers the following strategic best practices: the Parents as Teachers (PAT) Home Visitation Program that offers intensive parent training to families and their children. As participants in the PAT Program, parents are afforded an ABC Childcare Scholarship in a high quality daycare setting, while they work full-time and/or attend school. To support the needs of our early care teachers Bamberg County First Steps offers up to twenty hours of professional training and development to local teachers. Bamberg County First Steps is committed to improving the quality of parenting, health, early literacy and childcare in our community. We are committed to improving the readiness for all children to develop the skills to enter school ready and achieve their potential. We are committed and dedicated to improving the success of all children in school, work and life!



**Programs Available to Bamberg County Families through First Steps**  
Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
Child Care Scholarships  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k  
Early Head Start



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Barnwell County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,499
Children In Poverty	26.4	42.3%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	25.0%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	21.5%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
Children's Trust  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

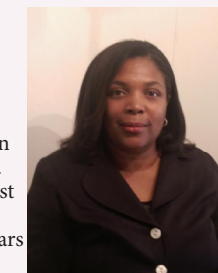
- Since inception, Barnwell County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,849,339** from sources outside of state government. **That's \$.51 for every state dollar received.**
- **41 children provided with scholarship assistance** so their parents could work or attend school.
- **26 families received 407 home visits** as part of the Early Steps to School Success Program.
- **Total Children Served in FY 16: 85**

Barnwell County First Steps  
5961 Lartigue St.  
Blackville, SC 29817  
Phone: 803-284-3160  
Fax: 803-284-3160 (call ahead)

Board Chair: John Holston

Ishuler@scfirststeps.org  
www.SCFirstSteps.com/Barnwell

### Barnwell County First Steps LaToya Shuler Executive Director



The mission of Barnwell County First Steps is to provide early childhood education programs designed to ensure that Barnwell County children arrive at first grade healthy and ready to succeed. Partnerships are the key for Barnwell County First Steps. Together with our partners, we provide Barnwell County families with children 0 to 5 years of age, the tools they need to better prepare their children for school.

Barnwell County School Districts 19, 29 and 45 do a tremendous job with our Countdown to Kindergarten Program. Teachers from each school district visit children's homes during the summer to introduce them to material they will be using when entering Kindergarten. Save the Children is our partner for Early Steps to School Success, a home visitation program that helps parents prepare their children for school success. The Darnell Initiative Committee is a group of local community advocates focused on increasing early childhood quality. Darnell Committee and Barnwell County First Steps offer Child Care Scholarships. These scholarships are provided to high quality daycare centers that provide a maximized learning environment for children. As we look towards the future, Barnwell County First Steps knows that with a strong foundation we can help our children be career and college ready allowing for success later in life.

*There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One is roots; the other, wings. - Hodding Carter*

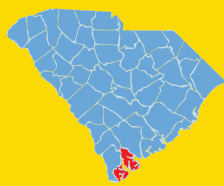


### Programs Available to Barnwell County Families through First Steps

Early Steps  
Childcare Scholarships  
Child Care Training

Countdown to Kindergarten  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k





## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Beaufort County
Children Under Five	289,990	10,040
Children In Poverty	26.4%	24.6%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	22.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	14.7%

• Since inception, Beaufort County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,915,887.69** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.29 for every dollar received.**

• **416 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 20 families in our Parents as Teachers Program.

• **Childcare professionals received 386.25 hours** of technical assistance for early care best practices.

• More than **400** Childcare professionals attended **59** training sessions.

• Improved parenting practices through **12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**

• Total children 0-5 years enrolled in Quality Enhancement facilities FY 16: **492**

• Total number of books given to children for homeownership: **4,341**

• **Total Children Served in PAT program FY16: 28**

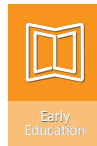
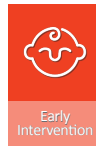
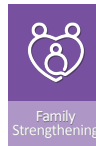
**Beaufort County First Steps**  
2201 Boundary St.  
Suite 111 Beaufort, SC 29903  
Phone: 843-379-7837  
Fax: 843-379-7840

**Board Chairman: Ashley Hutchinson**  
Ashley.hutchison@beaufort.k12.sc.us

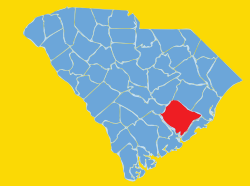
### Beaufort County First Steps Betty Washington Executive Director



Since 1999, the Beaufort County First Steps Partnership has been charged with implementing high-quality, research-based early childhood education programs to ensure our children have a greater chance of reaching kindergarten ready to succeed. We are committed to that mission and have worked tirelessly over the past several years to maximize the resources made available to our agency. To date we have leveraged an additional \$1,915,888 of in-kind and resources to expand services for children in Beaufort County. First Steps continues to thrive and grow as we make changes to our program delivery to ensure more positive outcomes for children and families being served. We know that during the early years, how a child learns and develops mentally, emotionally, and socially is critical to later success in life. There continues to be growing research on the positive effects of quality early-learning experiences on children's lives. As educators we also know how important it is to invest in early education to help deter and improve social issues. We appreciate the help and support given by our community partners. We will continue to build awareness around the importance of early education and work towards ensuring our children's needs are being met. You can help us as we continue to move forward by sharing information, volunteering at community events or by writing a letter of support to our legislators. Your actions combined with the work of all of our community partners make a difference in the lives of young children. As we look ahead, we need to continue discussions about the importance of early education. Our children are counting on us to be their voice and to ensure they have a bright future.



**Programs Available to Beaufort County Families through First Steps**  
Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
Child Care Quality Enhancement  
Community Education  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4K



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Berkeley County
Children Under Five	289,990	13,523
Children In Poverty	26.4	20.7%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	28.6%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	15.7%

• Since inception, Berkeley County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,917,090** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.22 for every dollar received.**

• **1,575 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 95 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.

• **Childcare professionals received 47 hours** of training for early care best practices.

• Improved parenting practices through **50 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 264**

**Berkeley County First Steps**  
6215 Murray Drive  
Hanahan, SC 29410  
Phone: 843-863-3030

**Board Chairman: Jean Gooch**

berkeleyfirststeps@hotmail.com  
www.berkeleyfirststeps.org

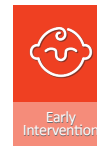
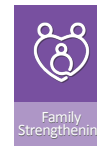
### Berkeley County First Steps Adrienne Troy-Frazier Executive Director



In South Carolina where choices for full-day, inclusive child care programs are limited, the qualifications for teachers are lower than in other states, child-teacher ratios are higher, and limited outreach is given to parents who need and want information. All of these glaring gaps have created a need for practitioners in this field to increase their roles as advocates for families of young children. In the decades to come, a brighter light will shine in the Tri-County, bringing additional resources and reform because of coming industrial expansion.

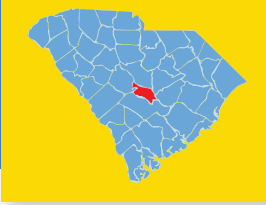
Since the beginning of last year, businesses have committed to an investment of \$785 million and the creation of 3,200 new jobs in Berkeley County alone. Berkeley County First Steps works to address some of the unmet needs in the county by increasing access to early childhood with vouchers for scholarships and providing parenting programs that best meet the needs of children and families. Although we do a lot of good, it is still not enough. No one agency has the fiscal and programmatic resources to be enough to address the current supply and demand for high quality early education in our region. We respond to gaps in early care and education systems by continuously strengthening our connections with local partners from the public and private sector.

With support and collaboration we can expand services for families as they prepare young children to be successful in life.



**Programs Available to Berkeley County Families through First Steps**  
Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
Early Identification and Referral  
Imagination Library  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k





## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	CALHOUN County
Children Under Five	289,990	750
Children In Poverty	26.4%	29.2%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	20.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	14.3%

• Since inception, Calhoun County First Steps has leveraged **\$753,488** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.30 for every dollar received.**

• **676 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 38 families in our Parents as Teachers Program.

• Improved parenting practices through **12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 285**

**Calhoun County First Steps**  
304 Agnes Street  
St. Matthews, SC 29135  
Phone: 803-655-5126  
Fax: 803-655-5695

**Board Chairman: Stanley Rivers**  
calhoun1steps@windstream.net  
www.CCfirststeps.org

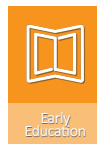
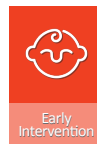
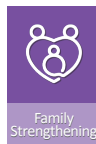
### Calhoun County First Steps Virginia Newman Executive Director



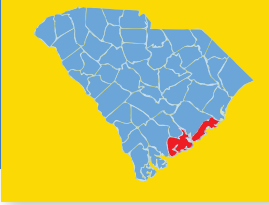
Since its inception, Calhoun First Steps has received unwavering support from the county government, the local school district and private businesses and organizations. Calhoun County Council provides office and meeting spaces resulting in in-kind over \$18,000 annually. County Council has participated in our annual fundraiser over the past four years. Calhoun DSS refers clients to our PAT and Imagination Library programs. Calhoun DHEC has given our partnership permission to join their monthly WIC Program classes to share information and register families in our early childhood programs.

In partnering with Calhoun school district, we are permitted to use their school buses/drivers for PAT field trips to Riverbanks Zoo, the Pumpkin Patch in Orangeburg and EdVenture in Columbia for the Countdown to Kindergarten Celebration. The school's nurses and speech therapists assist with our PAT screenings for vision, speech and hearing. The school district partners with us in our school transition program by identifying kindergarten teachers to serve as CTK teachers, identifying students to participate in the program and by assigning CTK participants to the CTK teachers' classroom. We receive annual awards from Tri-County Electric, Delta Sigma Theta-Orangeburg, and United Way of the Midlands.

We leverage state dollars at 30 cents for every state dollar allocated to our county partnership.



**Programs Available to Calhoun County Families through First Steps**  
Parents as Teachers  
Imagination Library  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
First Steps 4K



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	CHARLESTON County
Children Under Five	289,990	23,418
Children In Poverty	26.4	25.7%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	19.0%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	11.7%

• **\$8,036,491** was leveraged by Charleston County First Steps since inception, from sources outside state government. That's \$.59 for every dollar received.

• **2,343 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 91 families/ 112 children in our Parents As Teachers Program.

• **378 hours of technical assistance** was provided to 98 childcare professionals for early care best practices.

• **158 children** took home a different bag weekly filled with beautiful, high-quality multicultural books.

• **30 additional Hispanic children** were served in FY16 through our Trident Literacy Association partnership.

**Charleston County First Steps**  
6296 Rivers Avenue, Suite 308  
North Charleston, SC 29406  
Phone: 843-745-0237 ext.222  
Fax: 843-745-0895

**Board Chairman:**  
Richardine Singleton-Brown  
www.charlestonfirststeps.org  
jecollins@charlestonfirststeps.org

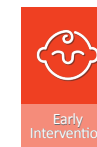
### Charleston County First Steps James Ella Collins Executive Director



#### WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

Research tells us there are times when certain parts of a child's brain can learn new information more easily than at other times - they call this windows of opportunity. Some of these windows open and then close during the first few years example, the connections for sight must be made in the first three or four months. If they are not made during this time, they are lost forever. This means the child will never be able to see. Other windows may remain open longer, but learning is easier at certain times. These are called sensitive periods. For instance, the first five years are the prime time for language development. This does not mean than children will know all there is to know about language by age five. Learning continues to take place throughout life. Although it takes 15-20 years for your child's brain to fully grow and develop, some things are just easier to learn at certain times than others.

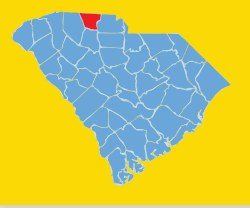
We know that the first five years of life are very important for building a baby's brain. This is exactly what we as parents, grandparents, and caregivers do every day. Everything we do and say can help to "wire" our children's brain for thinking, feeling, moving and learning. These are the years when we can make a big impact on our children's development and long term success. The window of opportunity allows us to feed our children's brain. Keep in mind, when we talk or read to them, play or sing with them, touch them, and nourish them with healthy food and love, we are actually feeding that very central organ: the brain.



**Programs Available to Charleston County Families through First Steps**

**Parents As Teachers**  
Early Head Start – Parents As Teachers  
Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership  
Nurse-Family Partnership

**Child Care Quality Enhancement**  
Child Care Center Training & Development  
Raising a Reader  
Trident Literacy Association



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Cherokee County
Children Under Five	289,990	3,480
Children In Poverty	26.4%	31.6%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	30.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	24.4%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
Children's Trust  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

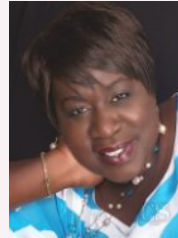
- Since inception, Cherokee County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,787,531** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.46 for every dollar received.**
- **1,890 children** were enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
- **28 children** received home visits during Countdown to Kindergarten to help them prepare for school.
- 103 unduplicated child care professionals **received 30 hours of high-quality training** to meet licensing standards.
- **13 children** received child care scholarships.
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 1,931**

Cherokee County First Steps  
P.O. Box 23  
Gaffney, SC 29342  
Phone: 864-487-9466  
Fax: 864-487-9461

Board Chairman: Dr. Ronald Cope

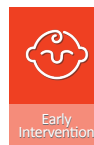
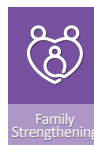
cc1ststeps@yahoo.com  
www.cherokeeountyfirststeps.org  
Facebook.com/cherokeeountyfirststeps  
www.talktomecherokee.com  
Facebook.com/talktomecherokee

### Cherokee County First Steps Dorothy Priester Executive Director

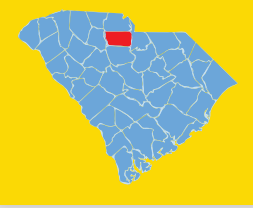


FY 2016 was another very active year for Cherokee County First Steps as we continue to advocate for young children. Our primary focus continues to be providing books for children ages birth to five years old through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. We are truly thankful for the participation and assistance from the Dollywood Foundation, all of our local supporters, and partners that allow us to be able to provide these wonderful learning tools. In addition to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, we also were able to sponsor and conduct Countdown to Kindergarten, a school transition program; provide training programs for child care workers; become a founding partner in the Talk to Me Initiative; offer child care scholarships for a limited number of families; and participate in the [I CAN] campaign. Through all of these programs and activities we were able to be a positive influence in the lives of over 1,900 young children in Cherokee County.

The members of the Board of Directors of Cherokee County First Steps actively support, and more importantly, actively participate in each of the programs mentioned above. I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank each of them for investing their time, effort, and money in order to enrich the lives of our youngest citizens. We also receive support and assistance from numerous individuals and organizations in the county. Space does not allow me to list all of those supporters, but please know that your efforts are sincerely appreciated. Without your support we could not succeed. Cherokee County First Steps has been an advocate for young children for over seventeen years. With continued support and effort, we will still be advocating for young children seventeen years from now.



**Programs Available to Cherokee County Families through First Steps**  
Imagination Library Program  
Talk to Me Initiative  
Child Care Training  
Child Care Scholarships Initiative  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4K



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Chester County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,982
Children In Poverty	26.4	33.5%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	28.6%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	15.7%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
Children's Trust  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

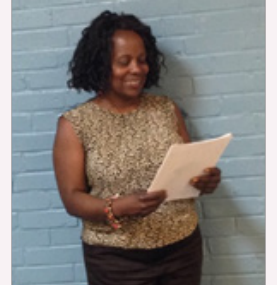
- Since inception, Chester County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,249,254** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.47 for every dollar received.**
- **838 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 33 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals **received 30 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through **13 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 31**

Chester County First Steps  
109 Ella Street  
Chester, SC 29706  
Phone: 803-385-6174  
Fax: 803-385-6265

Board Chairman: Joni Arrowood

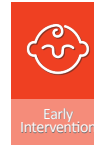
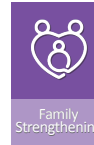
arrowoodjoni@yahoo.com

### Chester County First Steps Centuria Watson Executive Director

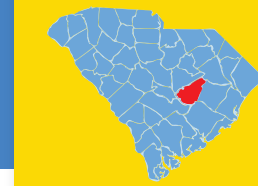
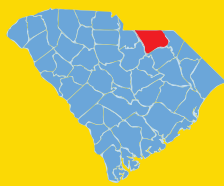


The lingering effect of community engagement that benefits our youngest learners became evident. We see communities that are sensitive to family issues for advancing all facets of school readiness.

Empowered stakeholders seek opportunities to collaborate to spread the messages of why it is imperative to invest in early childhood programming and services. Creating networks within and beyond county borders enable parents, community leaders, and organizations to combine resources that fortify the local infrastructure for supporting school readiness. Research repeatedly tells us the window of opportunity for capitalizing on brain growth and development is before age four. Focusing on children zero to age three by imbedding quality care practices in the home and at child care services will positively impact brain development. The pathway to learning success encompasses child rearing practices in the home. The Parents As Teachers program grooms parents to be their child's most fervent advocate. This is the ground floor where learning begins. Guidance and support are provided to families during the earliest period of child rearing. Moreover, increasing the skills and knowledge of teachers in early care classrooms is critical. The need for quality child care for teen mothers and working parents is the catalyst for channeling agency resources for increasing early care classroom best practices. The County Partnership Board believes each child starting school healthy and ready to succeed requires investing in our youngest learners now.



**Programs Available to Chester County Families through First Steps**  
Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4K



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Chesterfield County
Children Under Five	289,990	2,655
Children In Poverty	26.4%	35.0%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	21.9%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	22.5%

• Since inception, Chesterfield County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,301,390** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.74 for every dollar received.**

• Improved parenting practices through Incredible Years Parent Workshops. 100%

-All reported that the problems that originally prompted them to take this program for their child were either improved or greatly improved.

-All found the majority of the Incredible Years techniques to be effective in changing their child's behavior

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 216**

**Chesterfield County First Steps**  
100 W. Main St.  
Chesterfield, SC 29709  
Phone: 843-623-5904  
Fax: 843-623-5905

**Board Chairman: Amelia Clontz**

**kmartini@chesterfieldfirststeps.org**

**<https://www.facebook.com/Chesterfield-County-First-Steps-156821710934/>**

## Chesterfield County First Steps

**Karen Martini**  
**Executive Director**



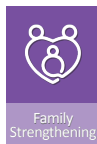
Over the course of the past year, Chesterfield County First Steps (CCFS) continued to expand its programs and services for young children and their families. Building on the foundation of established community partnerships, CCFS was able to directly serve and more effectively connect children and families to resources that are essential to a child's health, well-being and school readiness.

Through our partnerships and our emerging childhood system network, CCFS began conversations that set in motion plans for new collaborations to enhance health care and child care in our communities. Our communities' support for and engagement in our work for children make CCFS's progress possible. The investment in the future of our children by our business, education and faith community partners does and will continue to determine our ability to achieve our mission. The uncertain future of First Steps – as signified by the organization's failure to achieve passage of multi-year reauthorization legislation, by related bureaucratic maneuvers to de-emphasize early childhood education in our state and by ill-informed attempts to dismantle the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiative – will soon begin to concern all our partners and collaborators.

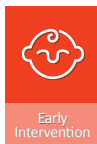
This year, there is no more important issue for the future of early childhood education in South Carolina than the passage of legislation that will provide stability, guidance and resources for First Steps. Effective and accessible early childhood programs and services are not established in a week or a month or even a year. If our community partners cannot depend on the long term commitment of the First Steps, they will not continue to invest in our work. Our children and our communities deserve a long-term public commitment to education equality. We stay steadfast in our dedication to meet the needs of our young children.



Healthy Start



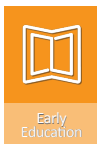
Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

## Programs Available to Chesterfield County Families through First Steps

**Blessings in a Back Pack**  
**Incredible Years**  
**Imagination Library**

**Blessings Resource Center**  
**BabyNet**  
**First Steps 4K**

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	CLARENDON County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,709
Children In Poverty	26.4	39.1%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	23.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	17.6%

• Since inception, Clarendon County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,176,918** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.37 for every dollar received.**

• **424 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 30 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.

Improved parenting practices through **14 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 257**

**Clarendon County First Steps**  
Post Office Box 426  
Manning, SC 29102  
Phone: 803-433-2848  
Fax: 803-433-2863  
**clarendonfs@ftc-i.net**

**Board Chairman: Tonia M. Smith, GPC**  
**tmsmith@csd2.org**

## Clarendon County First Steps

**Sharon P. Williams, MPA**  
**Executive Director**



Thank you to our many and diverse partners for all you do to help us prepare Clarendon County's children for success in school and in life.

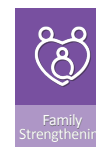
Whether you serve on the Partnership Board, serve as a vendor that implements one or more school readiness programs in partnership with us, serve as a source of referrals (referring families with young children to one or more of the school readiness programs) for our programs, serve as a source of funding (in whole or in part) for one or more of our programs, or partner with us in any number of other ways, we greatly appreciate you! Your willingness to collaborate with us enables us to maximize our limited resources so that we can reach as many of Clarendon County's families with young children as we can. Your willingness to collaborate with us since First Steps' inception has enabled us to make significant progress towards achieving our mission to "prepare Clarendon County's children for success in school and in life". We sincerely thank you for all that you have done thus far, and we look forward to working with you to continue to make a positive difference in lives of Clarendon County's youngest and most vulnerable citizens and their families.

Working together, we have and will continue to implement quality programs and services that will enable our children to arrive at first grade healthy and ready to succeed!

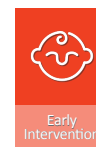
Thank You!



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education

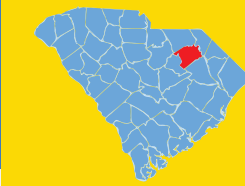
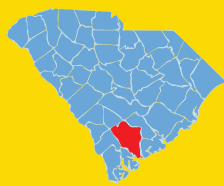


School Transition

## Programs Available to Clarendon County Families through First Steps

**Parents as Teachers**  
**Imagination Library**  
**Child Care Training**  
**Countdown to Kindergarten**  
**BabyNet**  
**First Steps 4K**





## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Colleton County
Children Under Five	289,990	2,246
Children In Poverty	26.4%	35.1%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	33.4%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	22.0%

- Since inception, Colleton County First Steps has leveraged \$1,719,052 from sources outside state government. That's \$.55 for every dollar received.
- Provided services to 13 families in our county through the Parents as Teachers Program.
- We provided 39.5 hours of certified Childcare professionals received 30 hours of technical assistance for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through **14 Group Connections Parent Workshops**.
- **4,742 Books Distributed** to children throughout the county.

**Colleton County First Steps**  
609 Colleton Loop  
Walterboro, SC 29488  
Phone: (843) 542-9494  
Fax: (843) 542-9513  
cdickerson@scfirststeps.org

**Board Chair: Juliette Green**

### Colleton County First Steps Cindy Dickerson Executive Director



The Colleton County First Steps Board and I believe our most significant achievements in the past fiscal year were implementing additional “home visitation” programs. These programs include: Nurse Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, and Countdown to Kindergarten. These programs consisted of over 50% of our budget.

These family involvement programs implemented over the past 5-10 years, according to data from the Kids Count report for 2015, reflect an improvement in infant mortality rates and child deaths ages 1-14. We believe that these programs have helped to make this difference in Colleton County.

Also, we have seen an increase in DSS/ABC Quality scores for some of our child care providers during the past 5 years. This increase in scores we believe is directly related to quality child care provider training through funding received from outside sources. We are thankful for partners who provide funding for this important program.

Our programs require a successful collaboration with community partners. We ask all parents and partners to join us as we launch new programs and continue programs that have proven outcomes. Parents find our programs easy to participate in and appreciate the educational books and materials we supply to enhance their role as their child's first teacher.



### Programs Available to Colleton County Families through First Steps

**Parents as Teachers**  
**Parent Training**  
**Countdown to Kindergarten**  
**Child Care Training**  
**Nurse Family Partnership**  
**BabyNet**

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Darlington County
Children Under Five	289,990	3,906
Children In Poverty	26.4	5,575
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	36.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	18.4%

- Served over **3,400 families** and their children utilizing all program strategies in FY16.
- Provided **1,312 hours of service**, support, and guidance to parents via Parents as Teachers.
- **Held 78 community events and professional development offerings.**

**Darlington County First Steps**  
437 W. Carolina Avenue, Bldg. 1  
Hartsville, SC 29550  
Phone: (843) 857-3148  
Fax: (843) 339-5928

**Board Chair:**  
**Dr. Alvin T. Heatley**

[dmcpfers@scfirststeps.org](mailto:dmcpfers@scfirststeps.org)  
[www.darlingtoncountyfirststeps.org](http://www.darlingtoncountyfirststeps.org)

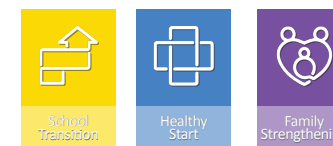
### Darlington County First Steps Darnell Byrd McPherson Executive Director



Over the past year, Darlington County First Steps has continued to work collaboratively with local, state, and national partners to accelerate progress of families. We trust, after reading this annual report, you will have a greater understanding of the complex issues which face families in poverty while recognizing the importance of interceding as early as possible in the lives of their children as well. Significant service gaps continue to exist for the children and families we serve: lack of a public transportation system, limited child care options – particularly for children between birth and three, low-wage jobs without benefits, and less than adequate public housing. These are the issues our families face on a daily basis which can cause depression and anxiety while inflicting toxic stress on their young children.

It is our goal at Darlington County First Steps to make a difference in the lives of our families by engaging them in programs and activities which support their personal development, strengthen their abilities to be supportive parents, connect them with educational and job opportunities, and provide positive reinforcement as they achieve goals and reach milestones.

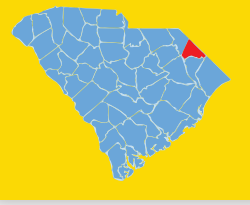
Though progress is being made, much more still needs to be done to create a more equitable environment for children and families in Darlington County. The Darlington County First Steps team of board members, partners, consultants and staff members are committed to this goal of accelerating progress!



### Programs Available to Darlington County Families through First Steps

**Access Condoms in Darlington County (AC/DC)**  
**Countdown to Kindergarten**  
**Diva Den**  
**Dad Cave**  
**Motheread/Fatheread**

**Parents Are First**  
**Parents as Teachers**  
**Community Outreach and Engagement**  
**Reach Out and Read**



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Dillon County
Children Under Five	289,990	2,193
Children In Poverty	26.4%	41.8%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	29.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	29.5%

• Since inception, Dillon County First Steps has leveraged **\$910,032** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.21 for every dollar received.**

• **641 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 22 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.

• Childcare professionals received **21 hours of childcare training.**

• Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 35**

Dillon County First Steps  
926 Perry Ave.  
Dillon, SC 29536  
Phone: (843) 774-0061  
Fax: (843) 774-0480

Board Chair: Nina Bradley

dcfsteps@bellsouth.net  
www.scfirststeps.org

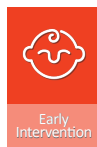
### Dillon County First Steps Dr. Daniel W. Blue, Jr. Executive Director



Dillon County First Steps (DCFS) Partnership Board and staff are proud to serve Dillon County's youngest children to build a strong educational foundation to ensure Dillon County's children are ready for school.

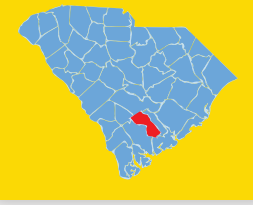
In 2015-16, DCFS continues the Parents As Teachers (PAT) Home Visitor Program that serves families with prenatal through kindergarten children and the Child Care Training and Professional Development Program that serves child care providers by offering certified training hours to fulfill their yearly DSS credit hours. Dillon School District Four continues to support DCFS by providing office space, meeting space, utilities, and copying service. A grant from the Dillon County United Way supports the Parents As Teachers program through the purchase of age appropriate books. A grant from South Carolina Child Care Career and Development supports child care trainings by assisting with presenter fees and advertising. Child Care Resource and Referral provides a trainer for child care training. DCFS continues to encourage community support through its 8th Annual Community Fundraiser. The fundraiser raises awareness of First Steps and assists with the purchase of needed supplies to enhance all programs. DCFS will continue to serve high quality education programs and encourage community support to ensure that Dillon County children have the best possible education.

By DCFS and the community working together as a team, we will build a dependable, reliable, and educated workforce in Dillon County.



### Programs Available to Dillon County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4K  
Early Head Start



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Dorchester County
Children Under Five	289,990	9,726
Children In Poverty	26.4	19.1%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	14.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	9.3%

• Since inception Dorchester County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,450,469** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.30 for every dollar received.**

• **422 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 30 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.

• Childcare professionals received **23 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.

• Improved parenting practices through **10 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**

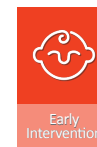
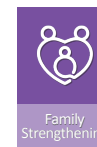
• **Total Children Served in FY16: 42**

### Dorchester County First Steps Crystal Y. Campbell Executive Director



I am delighted to be able to share with you the successes supported by the Partnership Board, former Executive Director-Karen Hill and Staff of Dorchester County First Steps. We are in our 16th year of carrying out the mission of "Getting Children Ready for School", and I am honored to be able to continue the fine work of Karen Hill and this Partnership Board.

Dorchester County First Steps has invested in many of the core areas of service. We contribute and support the work of the Nurse Family Partnerships and in so doing have helped to strengthen the overall health and well-being of 12 children. We also support and implement two Parenting Programs - Parent-Child Home and Parents As Teachers. In the Parent Child Home Program, housed in both the Dorchester 2 and Dorchester 4 School Districts we have provided 1,608 hours of support and guidance to 61 families. We continue to strive to improve the quality of our child care centers by implementing the Quality Counts, continuous quality improvement rating system and we are proud that we have 4 centers that have increased their "star" rating. I must mention two additional initiatives that occurred this year that will have long-lasting benefits for the future early literacy for young children in our county- Early Literacy Kits and Story-walks. Both initiatives were developed by Karen Hill. There are Literacy Kits in both county libraries that families are encouraged to check out and use, and we have had two Story-walks in surrounding community parks. All of these events were created with purpose; to help us attain our goal of "Getting Children Ready for School".



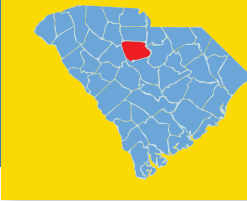
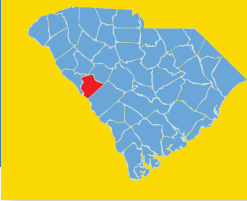
### Programs Available to Dorchester County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
Nurse Family Partnerships  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k

DORCHESTER County First Steps  
810 Travelers Blvd  
Summerville, SC 29485  
Phone: (843) 873-3507  
Fax: (843) 873-3414

Board Chair:  
Dr. Jacquelyn Hill

crystal.campbell@dorchesterfirststeps.com  
www.dorchesterfirststeps.org



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Edgefield County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,065
Children In Poverty	26.4%	26.5%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	17.7%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	20.1%
	KIDS COUNT data provided by	Children's Trust OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- Since inception, Edgefield County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,596,146** from sources outside state government. **That's 62 cents for every dollar received.**
- Over **4,000 books** were given to children.
- Childcare professionals received **35 hours of child care training** for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through **104 hours of Parenting Workshops.**
- Total Children Served in FY16: **134**

Edgefield County First Steps

P.O. Box 295

Edgefield, SC 29824

416 Calhoun Street

Johnston, SC 29832

Phone: 803-275-0800

Fax: 803-275-0800

Board Chairman: Bridget Clark

edgefieldcountyf@bellsouth.net

Edgefield County First Steps

Candi Lalonde

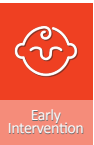
Executive Director



Since 2001, Edgefield County First Steps has been serving young children and their families with high quality programs designed to prepare each child for school. Our vision is for every child in Edgefield County to enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

We are able to do this through strong collaborations with our school district, health organizations, and local partners. This year we fulfilled our legislative mandate as the community convener around the needs of preschool children and their families by hosting a meeting that addressed the early childhood needs and resources in our county. This group will continue their work in the coming years to further ensure that early childhood education remains a priority in Edgefield County. With the support from our community, we will continue to provide early intervention services, strengthen families, improve children's health and well-being, and increase the quality of early care and education in Edgefield County. I thank all of the dedicated individuals who serve on the Edgefield County Partnership Board for sharing their time, resources, and expertise. I thank all the program staff members who work directly with the children and their families for their hard work and dedication.

Lastly, I thank the legislators, businesses, organizations, and citizens of Edgefield County for their support of and confidence in our work.



Programs Available to Edgefield County

Families through First Steps

Family Literacy

Imagination Library

Nurse Family Partnership

Countdown to Kindergarten

Child Care Training

Child Care Scholarships

BabyNet

By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Fairfield County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,096
Children In Poverty	26.4	34.5%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	27.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	16.4%
	KIDS COUNT data provided by	Children's Trust OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- Since inception, Fairfield County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,089,046** from sources outside state government. **This equals 41% leveraging.**
- 240 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 11 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received **83.5 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through **12 Group Connections Parent Workshops**, including two fun-filled and educational field trips
- Distributed over **3400 books** to children ages birth – 5.
- Total Children Served in FY16: **571**

Fairfield County First Steps

PO Box 215

101 N.CONGRESS ST. STE1

Winnsboro, SC 29180

Phone: (803) 635-1590

Fax: (803) 635-6873

Board Chair: CONNIE PETE

fcccouncil@truvista.net

Fairfield County First Steps

Patti Wilkes

Executive Director

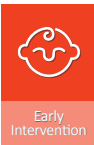
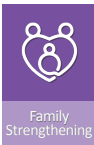


Our 2015-2016 year has been a busy one. Without cutting any programs, we were able to add the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program. This program allowed us to visit EVERY CD4 classroom in the county. We read with the children, set goals for the classroom, and then rewarded the classes for reaching their goals. What an exciting way to get children exposed to more and more books!

As a part of our continued collaboration with the Fairfield Community Coordinating Council, we wrote a grant through the USC Masters of Social Work program and had five MSW students come into the community to perform an in-depth Needs and Resource assessment for the community, focusing on First Steps. These students attended the FCCC meetings, Parents Workshops, and First Steps Board meetings. They conducted surveys with all of the FCCC agencies, with all of the parents served through First Steps and with others throughout our community.

Fairfield County First Steps in now partnering with the Palmetto Project in an effort to increase the number of children receiving books through our Imagination Library program. Any child living in Fairfield County is eligible to receive books through this program until their 5th birthday. United Way of the Midlands continues to partner with First Steps for our Countdown to Kindergarten program. We employed five local kindergarten teachers for the Summer 2016 CTK program. An added bonus for this year was the FC School District covering the cost of the toolkits for this program. The 50 identified students have been enrolled in the K5 programs across Fairfield County that began August 2016.

In partnership with the Fairfield County Library, FC First Steps held its First Annual Fun Walk, the Walk for Literacy. This year's walk was led by Sheriff Will Montgomery. The walk encompassed a short path along the walking trail at historic Mt. Zion through town and finished at the library where families were received in the celebration of the library's Summer Reading Kick-off.



Programs Available to Fairfield County

Families through First Steps

Child Care Tuition Assistance

Imagination Library

Child Care Quality Enhancement

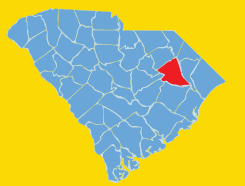
Countdown to Kindergarten

1000 Books Before Kindergarten

Parents as Teachers

BabyNet





## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Florence County
Children Under Five	289,990	8,885
Children In Poverty	26.4%	28.2%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	24.8%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	14.4%

• Since inception, Florence County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,190,832.20** from sources outside of state government. **That's \$.24 for every dollar received.**

• **1,128 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 45 families in our Parent Child Home Program.

• Childcare professionals received **109 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.

• Improved parenting practices through **14 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**

• **Total Children Served through Scholarships: 48**

Florence County First Steps  
415 South Coit Street  
Florence, SC 29501  
Phone: (843) 629-0202  
Fax: (843) 629-0054

Board Chairman  
Rev. Darren McClam

darrenmccclam@yahoo.com  
www.florencefirststeps.org

### Florence County First Steps

**Spencer Scott**  
Executive Director



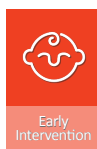
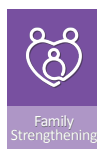
#### Changing today for a better tomorrow...

Based on our mission of "Getting Children Ready for School" set forth by "First Steps", we are contributing to the well-being, development and education of the youngest learners in our community.

The needs of our community continue to be Facility Quality Enhancement (FQE), ABC Scholarship opportunities, Parenting Home Visitation Programs, and providing technical assistance at child development centers. During Fiscal Year 16 we continue to focus on achieving our goals of providing quality early childhood experiences to as many children as possible through local and state partnerships such as: evidence based Parent Child Home Programs through Florence County School Districts #1, #3, #4, and #5. The South Carolina Department of Social Services awarded 48 Child Care Scholarships to children of families who were identified with two or more of the First Steps' risk factors.

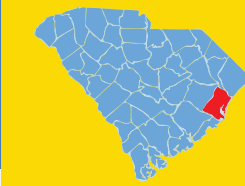
Florence County First Steps provided Child Care Training and grants to Facility Quality Enhancement providers and to the five neighboring counties: Darlington, Dillon, Marlboro, Marion, and Horry.

We will continue to take the necessary steps to transform the quality of early childhood through our initiatives. We aim to excite our youngest learners, parents (a child's first teachers), and child care providers as we move towards our mission of preparing young children for school.



### Programs Available to Florence County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Parent Child Home  
Child Care Quality Enhancement  
Child Care Training  
Child Care Scholarships



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Georgetown County
Children Under Five	289,990	2,872
Children In Poverty	26.4	31.6%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	20.9%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	14.9%

• Since inception, Georgetown First Steps has leveraged **\$3,186,473.98** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.66 for every dollar received.**

• **Reached 14 families** through our PATHS Parenting Program.

• Improved parenting practices through **11 Group Parenting Workshops.**

• Distributed 2,359 BabyNet/ Child Find materials.

• **Served 147 children** through our Early Identification resource and Referral Program.

• **Screened 11 children** for developmental delays and referred to services as needed.

• **Placed 739 books** in the hands of young children.

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 249**

Georgetown County First Steps  
2018 Church Street  
Georgetown, SC 29440  
Phone: (843) 520-1830  
Fax: (843) 520-1851

Board Chair: Patricia Canada

cdaly4581@yahoo.com  
www.georgetowncountyfirststeps.weebly.com

### Georgetown First Steps

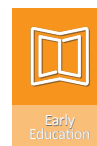
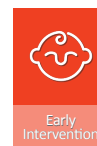
**Carol Daly**  
Executive Director



Many families rely on child care from the time their children are infants and well into the school years. Child care can be a rich experience in which children and their families gain a sense of belonging to a supportive community. Research shows that all children can benefit from participating in high-quality child care programs that work closely with family members and provide their children with environments, materials, and relationships that enrich learning and development. It is important that we provide the kind of learning environments and care necessary for all children to be successful in the early years as well as in school and later in life. To that end, I am pleased to present the Georgetown First Steps Early Head Start Program. Through this program, our community's neediest children receive the education needed to meet their developmental milestones. These services include: Early Learning: Teachers facilitate individualized learning experiences to promote children's readiness for school and beyond. Through planned and spontaneous instruction, relationships with adults, and play, children grow in language and literacy, early math and science concepts, and social and emotional development.

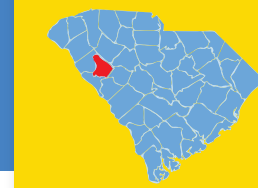
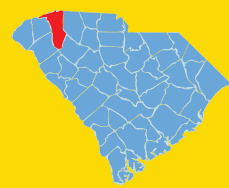
Health: Children receive health and development screenings, nutritious meals, oral health and mental health support. Programs connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services, and ensure that children receive the services they need. Family Well-Being: Programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families around children's learning and development. Parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals. Such as housing stability, continued education, and financial security.

The purpose of this report is to share our strategies, resources, and stories as we promote belonging for all children. We invite foundations, lawmakers, and collaborative partners to join in on this wonderful journey.



### Programs Available to Georgetown County Families through First Steps

Early Identification Resource and Referral  
Week of the Young Child Celebrations  
Community Outreach  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Greenville County
Children Under Five	289,990	31,525
Children In Poverty	26.4%	21.5%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	16.7%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	16.1%

•Since inception, Greenville County First Steps has leveraged **\$11,427,551** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.58 for every dollar received.**

•Nurse Family Partnership **selected as first Pay for Success site in nation** aimed at improving birth outcomes and saving taxpayer dollars

•444 childcare professionals received **over 40 hours of certified or registered training**

•**Distributed 70,258 free books** to children in Greenville County

•**Created the Palmetto Shared Services Alliance** to help increase access to high quality, stable, sound childcare environments

•**Total Children Served in FY16: 15,225**

**Greenville County First Steps**  
2101 Laurens Road  
Greenville, SC 29607  
Phone: (864) 248-4757

Board Chair: Keith Frazier

[www.GreenvilleFirstSteps.org](http://www.GreenvilleFirstSteps.org)

## Greenville County First Steps

**Derek Lewis**  
Executive Director



There is an old adage that says “If you don’t know where you are going, any road can take you there”. The Greenville First Steps Board of Directors has embraced its role in helping to set the trajectory for measurably improving School Readiness outcomes for Greenville children and families. During the 2016 year, the Greenville board committed half of each board meeting to re-defining our scope, mission, and the impact we intend to have in our community.

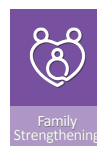
Instead of trying a shotgun approach, to support every well-deserving organization in our community, we looked at data points including program impact, measurable outcomes, community asset maps (where resources already exist), and alignment with other community visions, including the United Way of Greenville County’s School Readiness Roadmap and the SC Profile of the Ready Kindergartener. The team developed a 3-year strategic plan that targets the following outcomes:

1. Improve Graduation rates for teenage mothers and ensure teenage mothers have access to supports and resources to be successful parents
2. Increase access for families to high quality, stable, sound childcare environments
3. Improve birth outcomes for Greenville county children
4. Improve literacy outcomes for children 0-5
5. Integrate school readiness messaging within Greenville County community partners
6. Diversify revenue to ensure organizational sustainability

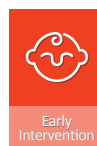
I am proud to be the Executive Director of an organization that is laser focused on ways our staff, board, and community partners can work together to ensure all children enter school on track and ready to succeed.



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

## Programs Available to Greenville County Families through First Steps

**Nurse Family Partnership**  
**BabySteps**  
**Palmetto Shared Services Alliance**  
**Childcare Training**

**Childcare Scholarship,**  
**Countdown to Kindergarten,**  
**Community Education**

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Greenwood County
Children Under Five	289,990	4,393
Children In Poverty	26.4	33.1%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	25.4%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	20.9%

•Since inception, Greenwood County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,614,018** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.41 for every dollar received.**

•**340 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 31 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.

•Childcare professionals received **32 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.

•Improved parenting practices through **36 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**

•**Total Children Served in FY16: 63**

**Greenwood County First Steps**  
1402C Highway 72 West  
Greenwood, SC 29649  
Phone: (864) 388-4102  
Fax: (864) 388-4102

Board Chair: Lark Coleman

[gnwdfirststeps@embarqmail.com](mailto:gnwdfirststeps@embarqmail.com)  
[www.gcfirststeps.org](http://www.gcfirststeps.org)

## Greenwood County First Steps

**Michael K. Gaskin**  
Executive Director



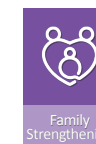
Greenwood County First Steps uses an innovative and creative approach to ensure every dollar received by the County Partnership is used to its maximum potential. Getting children ready to learn is an engagement that requires every agency within this County to understand the importance of being not just stakeholders, but passionate, dedicated, and committed stakeholders.

The Greenwood County First Steps Full Partnership Board makes “high quality” the key word to determine why a program should continue to receive First Steps’ funding. The service quality of Greenwood County First Steps’ programs grew tremendously with the addition of great local and state partnerships. The Department of Social Services, Guardian Ad Litem Programs, and the local court systems are also great partners, to reach the most at risk children in the community and assist with preventing child abuse and neglect. Lander University’s Education Department is another great partner. Greenwood and Abbeville County First Steps offer two Early Childhood Conferences a year at Lander University. Professors in the Education Department teach the classes as a part of their community outreach, and students assist as room monitors and with registration.

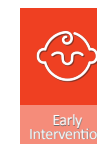
These great partnerships are success stories displaying positive impacts in the communities of both Greenwood and Abbeville Counties. Through these successful partnerships, Greenwood County First Steps offer children and families comprehensive services for school success.



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



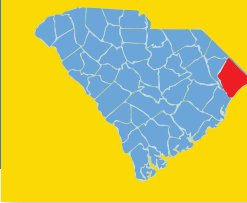
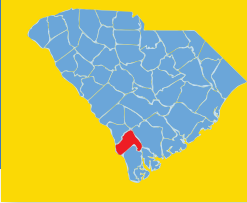
Early Education



School Transition


## Programs Available to Greenwood County Families through First Steps

**Parents as Teachers**  
**Child Care Training**  
**Fatherhood Initiative “Real Fathers are Dads”**  
**BabyNet**  
**First Steps 4K**



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Hampton County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,139
Children In Poverty	26.4%	34.8%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	34.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	17.7%

KIDS COUNT data provided by 

- Since inception, Hampton County First Steps has leveraged **\$751,396** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.24 for every dollar received.**
- **171 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 10 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Children and families received **187 books** through Dolly Parton Imagination Library.
- Improved parenting practices through **15 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 31**

Hampton County First Steps  
301 First Street East  
Hampton SC 29924  
Phone: (803) 943-7127

Board Chair: Shellie Ackerman  
hampton1steps@gmail.com

### Hampton County First Steps Dwana Doctor Executive Director



Hampton County First Steps primary mission is to focus on reaching our community with a network of services, programs and strategies to help SC's youngest citizens get ready for school. We collaborate with numerous agencies in county and out of county to reach this goal. This past year we faced some challenges as we transitioned Executive Directors mid-year, but we are ready to continue on our path to serve as many children and families in Hampton County as possible. Children who have had books in their life have a better chance of succeeding in school therefore we provide books to hundreds of children through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

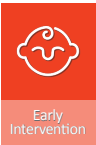
We also have provided over 170 hours of parenting support and guidance to 10 families through our Parents as Teachers program. Hampton County First Steps is very proud and dedicated to families and our commitment to ensure that all children are ready to succeed when they enter school.



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education




School Transition

### Programs Available to Hampton County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
Child Care Scholarships  
Early Identification & Referral  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Horry County
Children Under Five	289,990	15,730
Children In Poverty	26.4	29.9%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	16.5%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	16.9%

KIDS COUNT data provided by 

- Since inception, Horry County First Steps has leveraged **\$4,862,003.79** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.57 for every dollar received.**
- **602 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 45 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received **859 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.
- **Assisted 55 children** in accessing child care so their parent could work and/or continue their education.
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 105**

Horry County First Steps  
900-C Main Street  
Suite A  
Conway SC 29526  
Phone: (843) 488-3336  
Fax: (843) 488-3346

Board Chair: Mr. Bradley Todd  
Btodd002@yahoo.com

### Horry County First Steps Amy Breault Executive Director



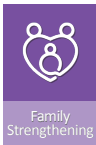
The Board and Staff of Horry County First Steps are proud to present the accomplishments achieved in another year of successful community impact. Exhibited within this year's annual report are the projects and strategies HCFS supported in 2016 in order to ensure all children in Horry County enter school on a level playing field, healthy and prepared for success.

This positive impact was achieved by setting a direction, creating alignment and gaining commitment around important early childhood issues within Horry County. This unbridled spirit to serve the needs of children and families was cultivated by a passionate staff, a visioning board of directors, a dedicated team of direct service providers, and a community of committed child care professionals. By being a part of this community-centered agency, it is amazing the stories we hear on a regular basis from parents, child care providers, health professionals and Kindergarten teachers regarding the ways in which HCFS projects are making a difference in the lives of children and families -- stories of newly developed parenting strategies, pre-school excitement, successful transition into Kindergarten, informative childcare referrals, and renewed excitement in the world of early childhood education. As HCFS continues to grow, we maintain a focus on collaborating locally so families' needs are met, overhead is kept low, and quality of services remains high. This forward thinking and big picture approach to service is exciting for all associated with HCFS, as it calls for new opportunities to explore, new champions to tell our story, and new assets to be mined for the benefit of HCFS and the children and families it serves.

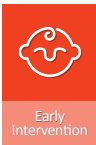
Thank you, from all of us at Horry County First Steps and from all those whose lives have been touched. As we move towards reaching our mission, we are excited about the future of children and families in Horry County.



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education

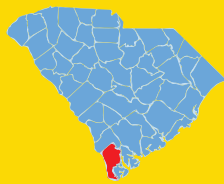


School Transition

### Programs Available to Horry County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
Child Care Quality Enhancement  
Child Care Scholarships  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k





## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Jasper County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,644
Children In Poverty	26.4%	41.2%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	49.0%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	24.8%

• Since inception, Jasper County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,092,921** from sources outside state government. **That's \$ .39 for every dollar received.**

• **477 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 34 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.

• Childcare professionals received **37 hours of training** for early care best practices.

• Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 531**

Jasper County First Steps  
456 Grays Hwy., PO Box 776  
Ridgeland, SC 29936  
Phone: 843-726-5100  
Fax: 843-726-5208

Board Chair: Deloris Dunham

loiszeke@hargray.com  
www.jaspercountyfirststeps.org

### Jasper County First Steps Duchett Polite Executive Director

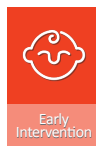


#### "I Can" Foster an Environment of Readiness in Jasper County

"I Can" is more than just a clever slogan when it comes to the education and school readiness of our youngest citizens. In Jasper County, we know that there is a wealth of possibilities in our communities to address the needs of young children, and we are committed to convening these resources to affect positive changes within our county.

"I Can" speaks to the individual assent that each person can play a role in helping children attain success through early, meaningful experiences that will build health for a child in all areas: physical, relational, and cognitive well-being. "I Can" advocate for the cause of our youngest learners to have diverse, creative outlets to explore their interests. I believe that sitting in a child care center in my county is the next great engineer, doctor, artist, and philosopher. However, for that dream to become reality, children need opportunities to experience new and varied mediums of expression so they can find that thing for which they are uniquely gifted. "I Can" support families, caregivers and educators of our youngest learners to build capacity for change. It will take families and schools together to propel children to their fullest potential. But they also need the undergirding support of our businesses and government to help them move from good intentions to excelling results.

Yes, "I Can" do my part to foster an environment of readiness in Jasper County, and I invite you to consider what your "I Can" will be as well.



#### Programs Available to Jasper County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Imagination Library  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Early Identification & Referral

Child Care Training  
Child Care Scholarships  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Kershaw County
Children Under Five	289,990	3,769
Children In Poverty	26.4	25.3%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	21.0%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	15.0%

• Since inception, Kershaw County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,482,631** from sources outside state government. **That's \$ .44 cents for every dollar received.**

• **210 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 20 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.

• Childcare professionals received **139 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.

• Improved parenting practices through 12 Group Connections Parent Workshops.

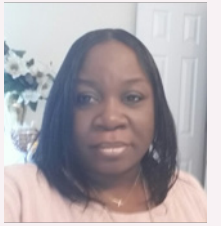
**Total Children Served in FY16: 399**

Kershaw County First Steps  
P.O. Box 669  
Camden, SC 29020  
Phone: (803) 432-7756  
Fax: (803) 432-7756

Board Chair: Stephen Wilson

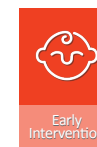
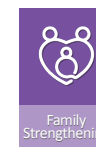
kjfirststeps@att.net  
www.kershawfirststeps.org

### Kershaw County First Steps Kimberley Edmond-Jordan Executive Director



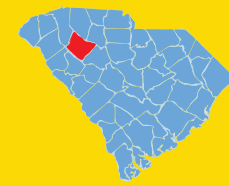
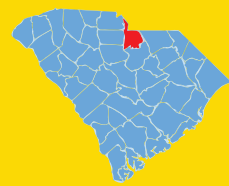
We want to thank you for your support of Kershaw County First Steps and all that we are attempting to do for our children and their families. We feel that the enclosed Annual Report for the past year is a valuable tool to share with you. We bring together all the people involved in a young child's early years - families, health professionals, early childhood professionals, caregivers, and many others - to ensure every child has all that's needed for a successful start.

We received financial and other resources from various sources and continued to be good stewards of the money entrusted to us. We were provided with \$179,344 in South Carolina state funds. Additionally, we raised \$16,150 in grants and gifts to further our mission. We were audited by an independent auditor for the previous fiscal year, and we received a "clean bill" of fiscal health, demonstrating the effective and closely monitored use of funds. Our outreach events continue to be a valuable tool for sharing these programs with the Kershaw County community, while encouraging participation and support.



#### Programs Available to Kershaw County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Quality Enhancement  
Early Identification and Referral  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4K



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Lancaster County
Children Under Five	289,990	4,882
Children In Poverty	26.4%	30.3%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	20.8%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	17.5%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
**Children's Trust**  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- Since inception, Lancaster County First Steps has leveraged **\$5,372,591** from sources outside state government. **That's an additional \$1.26 for every dollar received.**
- Lancaster County First Steps continued extensive work on a \$6 million grant to implement the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership initiative which will provide nine (9) **high-quality classrooms at four (4) local child care centers.**
- Lancaster County First Steps always strives to use resources wisely. In 2015-2016, our organization **reported an administrative cost of only 2.61 %.**
- **Over 13,000 books were provided** to children all across Lancaster County during FY16.

Lancaster County First Steps  
121 South Wylie Street  
Lancaster, SC 29720

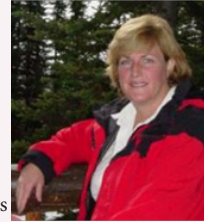
Board Chair: Brian Bass

(803) 286-8000  
LC1stSteps@compurium.net

www.lancastercountyfirststeps.org

## Lancaster County First Steps

**Lora P. Bryson**  
Executive Director



From the day children are born, they begin learning. Their early experiences are crucial to their long-term development. Yet studies show that children living in poverty can be a full academic year behind their peers when they enter kindergarten – a gap that grows wider as school progresses. Excellent early education can change that, making the earliest and lifelong impact on a child's life.

In this report, you will see the many ways we provide excellent early education opportunities that offer a continuum of comprehensive programs, services and initiatives so that children and families thrive in Lancaster County. This year, we are especially proud to report that for every state dollar we have received we have raised an additional \$4.69. In April 2015, we received approximately 6 million dollars to implement a federally-funded community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers. We have partnered with four (4) local child care centers to provide children ages 6 weeks to 3 years with a quality Early Head Start education designed to enhance the development in infants and toddlers. The Springs Close Foundation provided funds to serve 425 children with the Weekend Backpack Program at Clinton Elementary and Brooklyn Springs Elementary and provided partial funding to serve 100 Countdown to Kindergarten children across the county. Our local United Way provided the additional funds for this program as well as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program which provides developmentally appropriate books each month.

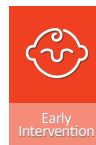
Lancaster County First Steps serves as a local portal connecting families of preschool children to community-based services they may need or desire to ensure the school readiness of their children. We act as a community convener serving the needs of our youngest citizens and their families; a county-wide needs assessment is conducted every three (3) years to assure that our goals are meeting the needs of the most at-risk families in Lancaster County.



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

## Programs Available to Lancaster County Families through First Steps

Countdown to Kindergarten  
Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Program  
Early Identification and Referral  
Imagination Library

Incredible Years Parenting Step By Step  
Resource Center  
Weekend Backpack  
Feeding Program

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Laurens County
Children Under Five	289,990	3,778
Children In Poverty	26.4	30.5%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	28.7%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	23.5%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
**Children's Trust**  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- Since inception, Laurens County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,388,669.59** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.51 for every dollar received.**
- **399 hours and 380 visits of support and guidance** were provided to 18 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received **34 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.
- Improved parenting practices through **30 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 18 child care scholarships 34 CTK**

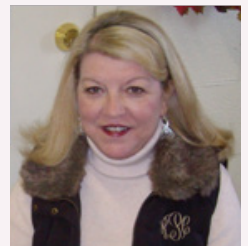
Laurens County First Steps  
301 Hillcrest Drive  
Laurens, SC 29360  
Phone: 864-984-8130  
Fax: 864-984-8131

Board Chair: Linda S. Wessel

lwessel@laurens55.org

## Laurens County First Steps

**Rosemary Patterson**  
Executive Director



In FY16 Laurens County First Steps collaborated with partner agencies to improve and enhance the quality of life for families with children ages birth to 5 years old. Our parenting work with pre-natal and teen moms who attend Laurens District 55 High School and Clinton High School in District 56 continued to expand. We held monthly group connections with these groups of young women on topics from pre-natal care, best parenting practices, health resources, literacy for pre-school children, job preparation and quality child care. We served 3 high school moms with Child Care Scholarships and intensive Parents As Teachers. 18 Families and 21 children participated in our intense Parents As Teachers program. Families are referred to us through word of mouth, doctors' offices, and child care centers.

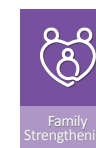
We collaborated with the Laurens County Library to provide books and information for parents through the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program. As a partner agency with the United Way of Laurens County, I spoke on behalf of agencies who receive UW funding at two business workplace campaign events. LCFS continues to partner with the Family YMCA of Laurens to provide training sessions for child care providers in Laurens County. We provided 34 hours of training which touched 107 staff and directors and approximately 478 children ages birth to 5 years old.

34 rising 5K students were served in summer 2015 with the Countdown to Kindergarten program. The students were identified by school districts 55 & 56, one child care center, and GLEAMNS Head Start. One child had never attended a 4K program.

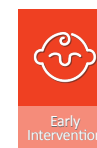
Our collaboration and support for the FS grant for Early Head Start at Thornwell has begun and will continue in FY17.



Healthy Start



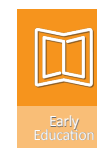
Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



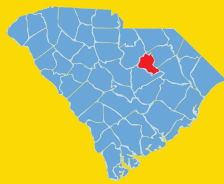
Early Education



School Transition

## Programs Available to Laurens County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
Childcare Scholarships  
School Transition  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Lee County
Children Under Five	289,990	886
Children In Poverty	26.4%	36.3%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	48.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	19.4%

KIDS COUNT data provided by  
**Children's Trust**  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- Since inception, Lee County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,672,084** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.66 for every dollar received.**
- **55 children served** by Parenting Programs
- **7 children received Child Care Scholarships**
- **20.5 hours of Child Care Training** were provided
- **10 children in Countdown to Kindergarten**
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 72**

### Lee County First Steps

310 Roland Street,  
PO Box 344  
Bishopville, SC 29010

Phone: 803-484-5110  
Fax: 803-483-0142

Board Chair: Andrew Moses

### Lee County First Steps Program Elder Alexis D. Pipkins, Sr. Executive Director



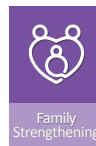
2015-2016 Fiscal Year has been a successful year for Lee County First Steps. The partnership board has managed to sustain partnerships which made it possible to continue providing already established services.

LCFS has continued to provide the following support with limited funding and staff: child care scholarships and center staff training and professional development to both early care professionals and parents. Also, Lee County continues to implement parenting programs (Parents as Teachers and Early Steps to School Success). LCFS provided support for 4K Assessment with the DIAL-3, and the PPVT-3. To enhance program quality, LCFS concluded the Parents As Teachers ILA Project. LCFS and RLI-Lee County continues its work through the SC Healthy Initiative Grant from SC DHEC and SC Tobacco Collaboration to focus on the health and well-being of Lee County's children and their families. LCFS continues to work hard to expand services throughout the community and across county lines, if necessary, to reach families and children who are in dire need of these services. LCFS received funds from SC Children's Trust to expand the Strengthening Families Program to serve families in the Darlington and Florence County areas. Additionally, LCFS has secured funds through Family Corps to implement Parent Anonymous Program. Parents Anonymous is an evidence-based family strengthening program utilizing mutual support, parent leadership, and shared leadership to achieve personal growth, improve family functioning and achieve parental resilience.

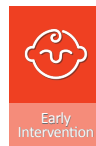
The value adds which LCFS continues to have on the local community is that we continue to serve as a visible advocate for the children and parents in Lee County. Although local resources are limited, LCFS is still passionate about its commitment to help children and their families, strengthening collaboration efforts with the Lee County School District, Head Start, private child care, and other partners in the local and regional community. LCFS has maintained its focus on addressing parenting, home visiting, quality child care with limited child care scholarships, child training, and school readiness.



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

### Programs Available to Lee County Families through First Steps

Early Steps  
Parents as Teachers  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Child Care Training

Child Care Scholarships  
Strengthening Families  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4K

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Lexington County
Children Under Five	289,990	16,854
Children In Poverty	26.4	20.1%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	18.4%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	14.5%

KIDS COUNT data provided by  
**Children's Trust**  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- Since inception, Lexington County First Steps has leveraged **\$7,005,829** from sources outside of state government. **That's \$.64 for every state dollar received.**
- **Implemented the largest Countdown to Kindergarten program in the state**, with 213 children served from 21 schools with 43 teachers According to Lexington County 5K teachers, 82% felt CTK children outperformed their fellow students and 87.5% had greater parent involvement.
- **Served 128 children** in Parents as Teachers, making gains in parenting skills and interactive literacy skills. Averaged nearly 23 home visits per family in 2015-16.

- **Supported 134 early childhood staff** with 14 sessions of quality training.

Lexington County First Steps  
101 West Columbia Avenue  
Batesburg, SC 29006  
Phone: 803-532-6861  
Fax: 803-532-6497

Board Chairman: Jennifer Felkel

jmiddle@lex3.k12.sc.us  
www.lexingtoncountyfirststeps.org

### Lexington County First Steps Program

#### James H. Riddle, Jr. Executive Director



Since 2001, Lexington County First Steps has been defined as filling gaps, enhancing and enlarging services and serving the most at-risk children through the collective wisdom of collaborations and partnerships across Lexington County.

Parents as Teachers (PAT), is an evidenced-based home visitation model used by Lexington County since inception of First Steps. It is the flagship of our county services and is the largest PAT program in South Carolina partnering with each of the five school districts' Parent Centers. Nurse Family

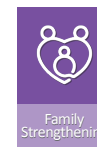
Partnership (NFP), also an evidenced based home visitation model, is offered through collaboration with Richland County. DHEC is the implementing agency serving 100 first-time low-income mothers in the two-county area, with 34 clients from Lexington County. Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK), an in-home summer visitation program serves as transition for children entering 5K who often have had little, if any, prior preschool experience.

Lexington County has the largest CTK program in South Carolina. Child Care Quality Enhancement Grants were awarded to two Centers in Lexington County with monitoring provided by a credentialed Technical Assistant and grants for equipment and supplies.

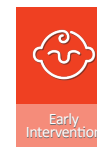
Child Care Provider Training continues to be a hallmark service coordinating with Midlands TEC (MTC), Childcare Resource & Referral (CCR&R) and the Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCCD). With minimal hourly rates, this service continues to be financially self-supporting.



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



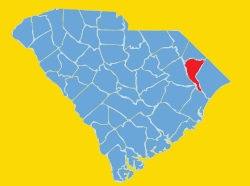
School Transition

### Programs Available to Lexington County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Nurse Family Partnership  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Child Care Quality  
Enhancement

Child Care Training  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4K  
Early Head Start





## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Marion County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,960
Children In Poverty	26.4%	48%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	37.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	19.1%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
**Children's Trust**  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- Since inception, Marion County First Steps has leveraged **\$661,178** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.16 for every dollar received.**
- **Implemented a county-wide Literacy Program** that benefits children, their parents and childcare providers in Marion County.
- **Dispersed more than \$150,000** in Childcare Scholarships to at-risk, underserved children and their families.
- Participated in the Statewide 25th Anniversary Celebration of the Read-In at the State House in Columbia, SC
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 795**

**Marion County First Steps**  
415 South Coit Street  
Florence, SC 29501  
Phone: (843) 629-0202  
Fax: (843) 629-0054

Board Chairperson: Victoria Belin

Email: [scott2omega@yahoo.com](mailto:scott2omega@yahoo.com)  
<http://scfirststeps.com/florence>

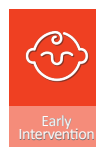
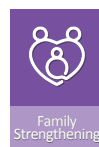
### Marion County First Steps Spencer Scott, MBA Executive Director



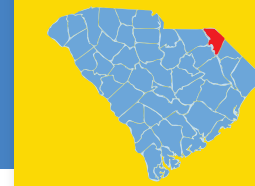
We wake up every day supporting children and families laying the foundations for success in school and in life. Everything we do at Marion County First Steps is about Children. We have a responsibility as the voice of our children and we'll be using that voice again and again to ensure their success. In June 2015, we outlined a plan to increase literacy and put our children into an educational environment. Although we accomplished our goals, this is a continuous process. As we progress, we seek community and partners to assist us in furthering the work of MCFS.

**Program Success** - Marion County First Steps continued to assist at-risk children and their families throughout FY16. More than 40 scholarships valuing over \$150,000 were distributed to children and families in need. The goal of scholarship distribution this fiscal year remained the same, allowing impoverished children who would not ordinarily be afforded the opportunity to experience quality childcare.

**Building a Strong Literacy Foundation** - The Marion County First Steps Literacy Based Program provides a literacy experience for birth to five year old children in public and private centers. The literacy coordinator read aloud to three and four year old children. The coordinator reads an age appropriate book. Each child is given a copy of the book along with a handout with parent-child interaction activities. The 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten is for children birth to five years old. Book baskets are put in businesses (physician offices, barbershops, salons, etc.) so that parents can read to their child while at the business. Parents earn rewards for reading to their child. Through these programs, Marion County First Steps is making an effort to increase literacy in Marion County.



**Programs Available to Marion County Families through First Steps**  
Child Care Quality Enhancement  
Child Care Training  
Child Care Scholarships  
Literacy Program



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Marlboro County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,468
Children In Poverty	26.4	46.52%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	36.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	29.5%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
**Children's Trust**  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

- Since inception, Marlboro County First Steps has leveraged **\$808,632** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.30 for every dollar received.**
- **621 hours of support and guidance were provided** to 19 families in our Parents As Teachers Program.
- MCFS collaborated with S.C. Child Care Resource & Referral Network to provide quality trainings for our Early Education providers
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 44**

**Marlboro County First Step**  
301 Jefferson Street, Room 105  
Bennettsville, SC 29512  
Phone: (843) 479-4200  
Fax: (843) 479-4227

Board Chair: Margaret Quick

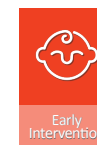
### Marlboro County First Steps Randall Johnson Executive Director



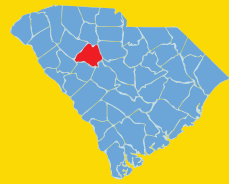
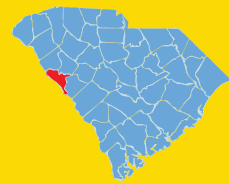
The Marlboro County First Steps Partnership continues to be a quality contributor to the Marlboro community. This can be noticed especially in terms of childcare and parenting. This past year we worked with 19 families who may not receive other parenting services. MCFS continues to be the lead county agency that works with childcare facilities throughout the community. We stress quality and efficient learning centers as opposed to babysitting.

**Marlboro County First Steps increases the quality of services for children 0-5 and their families.**

Through our Parents As Teachers parenting program as well as through our childcare scholarship program we have been able to assure that some of the families with the greatest needs in Marlboro County receive help that they may otherwise not get. Also parents are required to be actively involved with their children.



**Programs Available to Marlboro County Families through First Steps**  
Parents as Teachers  
Child Care Training  
Child Care Scholarships  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4K



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	McCormick County
Children Under Five	289,990	312
Children In Poverty	26.4%	37.8%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	16.7%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	12.6%



- Since inception, McCormick County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,178,291** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.83 for every dollar received.**
- **449 hours of support and guidance** were provided through home visits to 28 families in our Parents As Teachers and Nurse Family Partnership Programs.
- **2,574 books were given to children** in our programs and in our community.
- **Scholarships were provided to 12 children** to allow parents to work or go to school
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 170**

McCormick County First Steps  
615 Clayton Street  
McCormick, SC 29835  
Phone: (864) 852-9018  
Fax: (864) 852-9019

Board Chair: PAMELA TURMAN

turmanp@mccormick.k12.sc.us  
www.mccormickcountyfirststeps.com

### McCormick County First Steps Ruth Detrick Executive Director



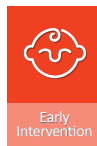
We collaborate with many groups in our community in order to provide services, at the least possible cost, to the children we serve.

Our partnership with McCormick School District allows us to provide Parents as Teacher services by sharing the cost of providing this program. The School District also shares the cost of our Early Education Program and allows us to provide early education for children under 4. Their support helps us to provide the ability to work or attend school for parents, and to offer the only child care center for pre-school children in our county.

Our Library Literacy program is staffed entirely by volunteers from the community. A representative from the public library provides story time. The local art's council provides art projects and lessons. A retired music teacher brings music, song and dance to our children. Another volunteer provides sign-language training as part of our Literacy program.

A local church has a group of women who read to the children in our child care center and also plan and host field trips and special art and music events to all the children we serve.

Without these strong partnerships we would not be able to serve as many children or to provide as many services as we do. We feel truly blessed by the wonderful community support we receive.



### Programs Available to McCormick County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Nurse Family Partnership  
Child Care Scholarships  
Library Based Literacy  
Reach Out and Read

Early Education for  
Children under 4  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k  
Triple P: Positive Parenting  
Program

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Newberry County
Children Under Five	289,990	2,214
Children In Poverty	26.4	30.3%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	30.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	20.6%



- Since inception Newberry County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,025,697** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.36 for every dollar received.**
- Through our **intensive home visitation program** for at-risk families, we exposed as many as four generations to spending quality time together through family sessions/screening during FY16.
- **We served over 565 children** in our library-based literacy program, giving children over 4500 books.
- **Total training attendance for our quality child care training program was over 500!**

Newberry County First Steps  
P.O. Box 25  
540 Brantley St.  
Newberry, SC 29108  
Phone: (803)321-1073  
Fax: (803)321-1067

Board Chair: Elizabeth Bozard

pcaldwell@newberry.k12.sc.us  
www.newberryfirststeps.com

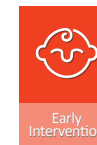
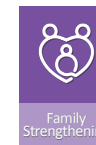
### Newberry County First Steps Patricia H. Caldwell Executive Director



Newberry County First Steps targets children under the age of six. First Steps is an initiative designed to achieve results through partnerships at state and local levels, among public and private entities. County-level partnerships - with their unique ability to identify local needs, resources, and collaborative opportunities - are designed to efficiently focus program efforts and reach children where they live. Since inception, Newberry County First Steps has leveraged \$1,025,697 from sources outside of state government. That's 36 cents for every state dollar.

**The Community** - There has been a strong collaboration with the school district of Newberry, the library, child care centers, faith based other local non-profits, Newberry public housing, local government and other county partnerships to maximize our resources and ensure that all families know where to go to receive assistance for their families. Each year our programs show evidence of improvement: nationally recognized program, Parent as Teachers, Library-based program (children's literacy), Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) - where we have reached children throughout the county - and child care Quality Enhancement/Training. All centers have quality programs and one center has an "A+" rating. In addition, our new Early Head Start site serves 16 families and children 0-2 years old. The First Steps 4K program in our county serves 32 children.

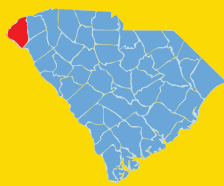
**Moving Forward** - The Partnership will continue to work with our partners as we focus on making sure that all children are healthy and ready to experience the success needed to create the motivation and engagement that sustains learning.



### Programs Available to Newberry County Families through First Steps

Parents as Teachers  
Library-Based Program  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Child Care Quality  
Enhancement

Child Care Training  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Oconee County
Children Under Five	289,990	3,971
Children In Poverty	26.4%	23.7%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	19.6%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	16.0%

• Since inception, Oconee County First Steps has leveraged **\$3,550,514.07** from sources outside state government. **That's \$1.08 for every dollar received.**

• **194 home visits and 194 hours of service** were provided to 16 first time, low income mothers through the Nurse Family Partnership Program.

• **519 home visits and 710 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 18 families with 27 adults and 35 children through the POPS/PAT Program.

• Childcare professionals received **39.50 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.

• Improved parenting practices through **32 Group Connection Meetings**.

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 1,041**

Oconee County First Steps  
409 E. North 1st St Suite C  
Seneca, SC 29678  
Phone: 864-985-4357

Board Chair: Stacie Powell

Email: [dunnamsmith@nctv.com](mailto:dunnamsmith@nctv.com)  
[www.oconeefirststeps.org](http://www.oconeefirststeps.org)

### Oconee County First Steps

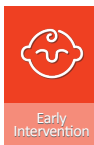
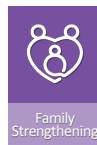
**Marie M. Dunnam**  
Executive Director



Oconee County First Steps is alive and well as we continue our work toward fulfilling our Vision Statement: "All children in Oconee County will have the care they need to grow and develop to their full potential".

We are aware that nothing happens in a vacuum, but rather through nurturing our relationships with others, and cultivating new ones through collaboration and partnership. As a result, we started our {I CAN} Campaign in early December 2015, and as usual invited not only our partners, but parents, educators and the entire community to join us. We were thrilled to have Senator Thomas Alexander, Sheriff Mike Crenshaw, Oconee County Council Chair, Paul Cain, City of Seneca Mayor Dan Alexander, and Oconee County School District Superintendent Michael Thorsland to be the first to join us in making their {I Can} statements that were posted on our Facebook Page and displayed on digital billboards. Everyone has a part to play, and it is true, everyone CAN do something to assist in preparing our children to arrive at first grade healthy and ready to learn. Please let us know what {YOU CAN} do by visiting our website: [www.oconeefirststeps.org](http://www.oconeefirststeps.org) and by liking Oconee County First Steps on FB.

The board and I hope you enjoy reading our FY 15-16 Annual Report as it truly represents your success as well.



### Programs Available to Oconee County Families through First Steps

NFP  
Parents as Teachers  
CC Training  
CC Scholarships

Countdown to Kindergarten  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Orangeburg County
Children Under Five	289,990	5,441
Children In Poverty	26.4	43.1%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	38.3%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	19.0%

• Since inception, Orangeburg County First Steps has leveraged **\$258,390.54** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.27 for every dollar received.**

• **766.1 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 52 adults and 61 children in our Early Steps to School Success.

• Childcare professionals received **38 Hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.

• Improved parenting practices through **3 Group Connections Parent Workshops**.

• **Total Served in FY16: 104 Adults and 1,017 Children**

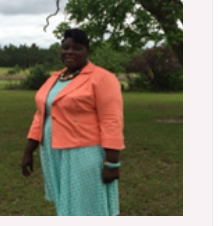
Orangeburg County First Steps  
350 Thomas Eklund Circle  
Orangeburg, SC 29115  
Phone: (803)533-6444

Board Chair: Matthew Henderson

[Matthew.Henderson1258@gmail.com](mailto:Matthew.Henderson1258@gmail.com)  
[www.orangeburgfirststeps.org](http://www.orangeburgfirststeps.org)  
@FirstStepsOburg  
<https://www.facebook.com/Orangeburg-County-First-Steps>

### Orangeburg County First Steps

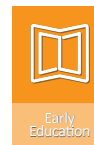
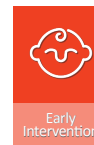
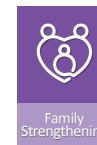
**LaMyra Sanders**  
Executive Director



It is an honor and a privilege to continue to serve the youngest citizens of Orangeburg County and their families. The role of Orangeburg County First Steps is to increase school readiness outcomes for children ages 0-5. We are very excited about the impact that we have had throughout the county during FY 15-16. We continue to provide quality enhancement services for five child development centers in the following cities: Cope, Eutawville, Orangeburg and Santee. Other services include home visitation, scholarship and training. We are proud to announce one of the greatest accomplishments of FY 15-16; Wright Way Child Development Center of Eutawville has transitioned to the Standard Transition Approach to Receiving Resources (STARR) Maintenance Program. We salute LaShondia Wright for her remarkable progress! With the technical assistance provided by Orangeburg County First Steps, Wright Way's tremendous milestones include, but are not limited to: Initial Environment Rating Scale Score: 3.3

- Current Environmental Rating Scale Score: 5.83
- Center received USDA Child Care Food Program 2011
- Enrolled in the 4k Program with South Carolina First Steps
- Center of the Year by South Carolina First Steps 2015-16
- Opened a second location in Vance, South Carolina
- All teachers completed Early Child Development 101
- Five teachers received credentials with the Child Development Association
- Purchased two buses
- Recipient of Early Head Start Grant

We continue to prepare children for school by serving families through a very strong partnership with Orangeburg Consolidated School District 5 and Save The Children. Our Early Steps to School Success Program serves parents in their home environment by equipping them to be their children's first teacher. Parents continue to teach their children through other programs hosted by the agency such as Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK). Participants in CTK establish strong relationships with school faculty, are exposed to their kindergarten classroom and participate in activities that foster a healthy mentality for learning during the initial year of school. Overall, Orangeburg County continues to be focused on every opportunity to assist families, schools and communities in increasing school readiness outcomes for our youngsters.

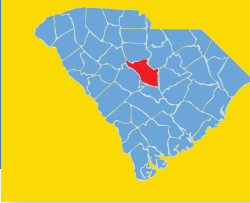
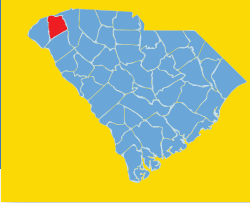


### Programs Available to Orangeburg County Families through First Steps

Countdown To Kindergarten  
BabyNet  
Childcare Training  
First Steps 4k

Early Steps to School Success  
Imagination Library  
Childcare Scholarship  
Quality Enhancement Program





## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Pickens County
Children Under Five	289,990	6,074
Children In Poverty	26.4%	21.9%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	20.2%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	18.4%

- Since inception, Pickens First Steps has leveraged **\$1,812,105.04** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.31 for every dollar received.**
- **735 hours of support and guidance were provided** to 30 families in our Parents As Teachers program.
- **Provided 11,216 hours of shared reading time** for 701 children in our Book Flood program
- **427 children screened for hearing or developmental concerns** through our Early Steps identification program

### FY16 Impact:

- 900 adults served
- 1,170 children served birth to age 5
- 1,297 home visits
- 4,578 educational materials distributed
- Over 1,000 books distributed

Pickens County First Steps  
P.O. Box 1113  
Central, SC 29631  
Phone: 864-654-3000

Board Chairman: Lyle Jacks

abuckner@scfirststeps.org  
www.pickenscountyfirststeps.org

### Pickens County First Steps Amity Buckner Executive Director

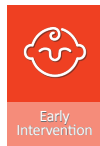
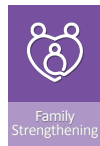


Pickens County First Steps continues to focus on the importance of early experiences because we know these experiences affect the brain for decades to come. This year we continued to invite our community members of all ages to become a super hero for our youngest learners. Our weekly blog post focused on everyday ways our local super heroes could help improve school readiness.

With each community outreach event, we provided all our young children with a brand new book. PCFS integrated literacy within all of our programs. We partnered, built and installed 6 Little Free Libraries at each Born Learning Trail in the county. We began offering childcare scholarships to families seeking to become financially stable. We partnered with the YMCA to offer trainings for their child watch, after-school care and summer camp staff.

As we continue to meet needs in our county, I invite you to join Pickens County First Steps in being a super hero for our youngest learners, our future. Their voice is not always heard and they do not get the opportunity to choose their family. Read a book, ask questions, listen, speak the truth, encourage young parents, volunteer. Show a child that they are valued. Early experiences matter!

Thank you for the continued privilege of serving as a voice for the least of these.



### Programs Available to Pickens County Families through First Steps

Book Flood  
Child Care Scholarships  
Early Identification and Referral  
Parents as Teachers

Community Education  
Child Care Trainings  
BabyNet  
Nurse Family Partnerships

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Richland County
Children Under Five	289,990	23,752
Children In Poverty	26.4	22.2%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	22.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	11.3%

- Since its inception, Richland County First Steps has leveraged **\$14,124,048** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.97 for every dollar received.**
- **3,158 home visits** were provided to 133 families in our Family Strengthening Program.
- Childcare professionals received **1,251 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.
- Childcare professionals received **45 hours of certified training** for early care staff annual recertification requirements.
- Improved parenting practices through **67 Group Connections Parent Workshops.**

- **Total Children Served in FY16: 571**

Richland County First Steps  
2008 Marion Street, Suite B  
Columbia, SC 29201  
Phone: (803) 256-7237  
Fax: (803) 212-4205

www.rcfirststeps.org

Board Chair: Penny Dininny

board@rcfirststeps.org  
www.rcfirststeps.org

### Richland County First Steps Rick Noble Executive Director



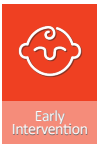
First Steps began in 1998 as an idea, a campaign theme which became law in 1999 and started serving children and families across the 46 counties in South Carolina in 2000. Like a child, First Steps was born, survived its vulnerable early years and has now grown into a teenager. We've changed along the way, but the truth is that to continue to survive we're going to need to continue to change. Many teenagers (and many organizations who have survived) are not particularly interested in changing, believing they pretty much know it all. Wisdom comes to each on its own schedule.

Before I continue, let me acknowledge that RCFS excels because of its amazingly talented staff and its dedicated Board of Directors. They are the heroes, the true champions for children and families, and RCFS's greatest asset.

So do we need to change even more to survive? Absolutely, more change for First Steps is mandatory, and here's why:

- 1) Competition for limited public and private resources will continue to be intense. Education requires and consumes large quantities of these resources. It is spread across a wide spectrum of age groups, even though there is widespread agreement that the best investment of a dollar is in the early years.
- 2) We need to form partnerships that are more economical and effective.
- 3) Education needs to be viewed along a continuum beginning as early as birth.
- 4) Fragmentation of service is recognized by all, including funders (private/public), as unnecessary and correctable. Why can't everyone commit to doing a better job of collaborating?
- 5) Our knowledge of what works has increased dramatically, yet we're slow to adapt our approaches to implementation.

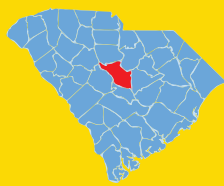
While those are daunting challenges facing our future, we shouldn't lose sight of the positive changes that have already occurred. The good news is that our awareness of the importance of early childhood development and education has increased exponentially over the last 17 years. Parents are much more aware and committed to developmentally appropriate child-rearing. They are gaining a better understanding of realistic expectations for children's growth. The general public, including elected officials, are more supportive of early childhood investment.



### Programs Available to Richland County Families through First Steps

Child Care Quality Enhancement  
Child Care Training

Early Head Start  
Family Strengthening



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Saluda County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,139
Children In Poverty	26.4%	34.8%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	26.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	33.0%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
Children's Trust  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

• Since inception, Saluda County First Steps has leveraged **\$1,484,821** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.49 for every dollar received.**

• **100 hours of adult education** were completed by 13 ESL families in our Family Literacy Program.

• Childcare professionals received **24 hours of high-quality, professional workshop training** based on early care best practices.

• **Total Children Served in FY16: 186**

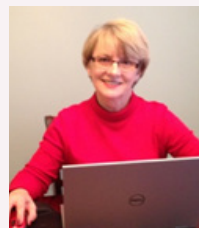
**Saluda County First Steps**  
103 S Rudolph Street  
Saluda, SC 29138  
Phone: (864) 993-0610  
Fax: (864) 445-2427

**Board Chair: Dr. David Mathis**

**Facebook: Saluda County First Steps**

### Saluda County First Steps

**Deb Padgett**  
Executive Director



Working with young children and families of young children can be challenging. But the rewards can be immeasurable. Through collaborating and partnering with other agencies and organizations, all of us can better meet the needs of our youngest citizens. Working together increases the probability of empowering families to meet the needs of their children, thereby helping them gain confidence and competence. Empowerment, confidence, and competence create a rewarding environment of success and achievement for everyone.

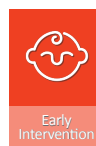
Saluda County First Steps has strived to create strong bonds and positive relationships with the school district, 4K programs, child care centers, DSS, adult education, and individuals throughout the community. Through these alliances, together, we create a strong force in helping our children become successful in school and life.



Healthy Start



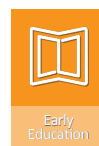
Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



School Transition

### Programs Available to Saluda County Families through First Steps

**Positive Parenting Program**  
**Family Literacy**

**Childcare Quality Enhancement**

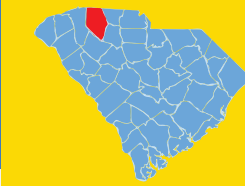
**Child Care Training**

**Childcare Scholarships**

**Countdown to Kindergarten**

**BabyNet**

**First Steps 4K**



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Spartanburg County
Children Under Five	289,990	18,398
Children In Poverty	26.4	26.9%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	20.4%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	18.6%

KIDS COUNT  
data provided by  
Children's Trust  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

• Since inception, Spartanburg County First Steps has leveraged **\$27,756, 265** from sources outside of state government. **That's \$2.27 for every state dollar received.**

• Quality Counts #'s **54%** early care and education programs enrolled in Quality Counts.  
FY16 Quality Counts provided **38 programs** with:  
- **733 hours** of technical assistance  
- **65 hours** of high quality training  
- **150 classrooms** with modeling and coaching  
- **2000+ children** with enhanced learning environments

• On March 1, 2015 our program was **awarded a 2nd Federal grant for \$1,474,814**. The intent of the grant is for Early Head Start to partner with community childcare centers to serve low-income, working families. The #'s, 80 new slots, totaling **200 Early Head Start children** being served.

• Since 2009, **500 Spartanburg County** vulnerable first-time mothers and their babies received services from Nurse Family Partnership.

• **Over 2500 children** benefit daily from First Steps services.

**Spartanburg County First Steps**  
900 South Pine Street  
Spartanburg S.C. 29302  
864-327-4900  
www.1steps.org

**Board Chair**  
**Wanda L. Fowler**

### Spartanburg County First Steps

**Carolyn Brooks**  
Executive Director



We at Spartanburg County First Steps are delighted to offer you our 2016 Annual Report. The report outlines another year of the services received by some truly amazing and inspirational children in our county. From the countless testimonies of the families we have served, we have gained an awareness of the positive impact of our programs.

We are grateful for the school districts, agencies, and organizations that have partnered with us to provide resources for children and their families. The efforts of our partners, funders, and supporters allow us to give our time each day to raise and sustain the level of quality of all early childcare and to ensure that children of low-income families are served.

Graham Green made the following statement concerning the success of children: "There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in."

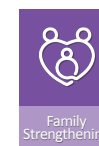
Spartanburg County First Steps wants to open doors for our children so the future can be bright and filled with promising possibilities.

We hope this report helps you to become even more informed of how Spartanburg County First Steps is an important part of the successful initiatives in our county that are bringing about positive change. Research reminds us that our community is stronger when our children are actively engaged and successful in school and community.

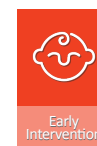
Spartanburg County First Steps provides programs and trainings that will enable our children to be prepared and eager to seize the opportunities that await them as they enter school. We hope this report will not only inform you but also inspire you to be eager and prepared to advocate for programs that safeguard the genuine success of our children.



Healthy Start



Family Strengthening



Early Intervention



Quality Child Care



Early Education



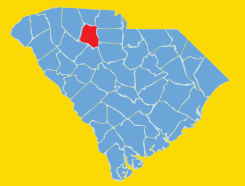
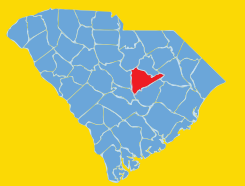
School Transition

### Programs Available to Spartanburg County Families through First Steps

**Early Head Start**

**Quality Counts**

**Nurse Family Partnership**



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Sumter County
Children Under Five	289,990	7,502
Children In Poverty	26.4%	32.7%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	28.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	13.5%



- **Over 350+ children impacted** through Parents As teachers; Childcare Scholarships; Dolly Parton Imagination Library and Childcare Training for Childcare Providers
- **Over 85 childcare providers/directors have benefited** from our childcare training program. The number of children in their care, which have been impacted from our training.

**Sumter County First Steps**  
220 Hasel Street  
Sumter, SC 29151

**Phone: 803-774-5500, Extension 131**  
**Fax: 803-774-3501**  
**Mobile: 803.464.1224**

**Board Chairman: Walter Newman**

**juliadeltalady@yahoo.com**

## Sumter County First Steps

**Julia A. Nelson**  
**Executive Director**



Since the inception of South Carolina First Steps in 1999, the importance and awareness of school readiness has increased in our state. Early educators with varying terminology define school readiness as children ready for school. First Steps defines school readiness as children prepared and ready for school success. The Office of Head Start defines school readiness as “children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.” Regardless of the terminology it entails setting measurable goals with evidence-based strategies; planning and implementation; and assessment and evaluation.

Sumter County First Steps (SCFS) has concentrated on strategies that will increase the likeliness of children being prepared to successfully enter school ready to learn. This is being accomplished by focusing on strategies, which increase parenting skills and quality childcare. SCFS is providing a home visitation program to help train parents on how to be their child's first and best teacher. We have chosen Parent As Teachers (PAT) as a strategy to assist with this goal. PAT is a national model, which is an evidence-based early childhood home visitation program. PAT will increase a parent's knowledge of child development and improves parenting practices. SCFS is also providing childcare training to childcare providers and Scholarships/ABC Vouchers for quality childcare. Quality childcare is a research-based determinant of school readiness. When you think about the number of hours children are with child care providers, you can understand the importance of quality. We also support our families with Dolly Parton Imagination Library to develop an environment, which has a love for reading. An age appropriate book is mailed to the child each month up until their 5th birthday.

SCFS has established these strategies to improve school readiness in Sumter County. These strategies “will not change substantially from year to year. However, goals for individual children and families will likely change based on needs and progress revealed by ongoing data collection.” SCFS is appreciative for all of its community partners and other agencies involved in school readiness. Together, we are making a difference.



## Programs Available to Sumter County Families through First Steps

**Parents As Teachers**  
**Imagination Library**  
**Childcare Training**

**Childcare ABC/Scholarships**  
**Babynet**  
**First steps 4-K**

## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Union County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,497
Children In Poverty	26.4	29.2%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	19.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	19.1%



- **61 children were served** through Early Steps to School Success (with a total of 429 home visits)
- **15 children received Countdown to Kindergarten services**
- Childcare professionals received **21 hours of classroom training**
- **9,313 books were distributed** to children in Union County through Imagination Library, home visits, and community events

**Union County First Steps**  
120 Lakeside Dr.  
Union, SC 29379  
(864)429-1478  
**lwade@union.k12.sc.us**

**Board Chair: Connie Springs**

## Union County First Steps

**Laura Wade**  
**Executive Director**



Exciting things are happening in Union County for our youngest citizens and their families! Children and their families are receiving services and support that will help them be ready to enter school and be successful.

**Programs Serving Children 0-5 and Their Families:**

The Early Steps to School Success home visitation program continues to grow and provide resources to children and families in Union. This past year, 61 children and their families received these valuable services. An additional 117 children were served through the Book Bag Exchange program. Child care workers were able to complete training courses to better prepare preschoolers for entering kindergarten. Countdown to Kindergarten provided quality early learning experiences for 15 children and their families this year. Through our partnership with United Way of the Piedmont, Imagination Library served over 700 children who received books delivered to their homes.

**Public and Private Partnerships:**

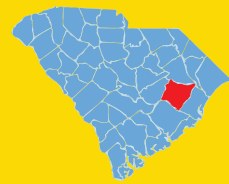
Thanks to our partners and support of the community, additional funding and resources have been added to our state funds to allow us to serve children and families. Through working together, our goals are being met!



## Programs Available to Union County Families through First Steps

**Early Steps to School Success**  
**Imagination Library**  
**Countdown to Kindergarten**  
**Child Care Training**  
**BabyNet**  
**First Steps 4K**





## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Williamsburg County
Children Under Five	289,990	1,724
Children In Poverty	26.4%	49.3%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	39.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	15.2%

KIDS COUNT data provided by Children's Trust of South Carolina

- Since inception, Williamsburg County First Steps has leveraged **\$2,055,648** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.43 for every dollar received.**
- **621 hours of support and guidance were provided to 29 families** in our Parent-Child Home Program.
- Childcare professionals received **34 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.
- Improved parent awareness of kindergarten expectations through **114 hours of home visits** through the Countdown to Kindergarten Program.
- **Total Children Served in FY16: 484**

Williamsburg County First Steps  
500 North Academy Street  
Building A  
Kingstree, SC 29556  
Phone: (843)355-1031

Board Chair: Ophelia McClary Starks

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[http://www.wcsd.k12.sc.us/pages/WCSD/Department/First\\_Steps](http://www.wcsd.k12.sc.us/pages/WCSD/Department/First_Steps)  
cisreal@wcsd.k12.sc.us

### Williamsburg County First Steps Carletta Scott Isreal Executive Director

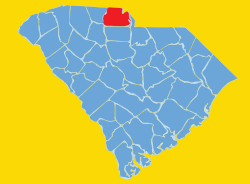


Williamsburg County First Steps Partnership Board is proud of the many successes and collaborative partnerships that have been established to serve children and their families more efficiently and effectively in Williamsburg County. These collaborative efforts can be seen through our programs to include Parent-Child Home, Imagination Library, Countdown to Kindergarten and Child Care Training. The programs provide services to children and assist parents in getting their children ready for school. In addition, Williamsburg County First Steps has increased the quality of services available to children and families using research and data.

Through the SC Budget and Control Board's Office of Research and Statistics, programs and results are tracked longitudinally. In addition to independent reviews show that First Steps programs work with 66% of parents showing significant improvements in skills after participation in a First Steps parent education program. Similar results for child care providers participating in First Steps' quality enhancement efforts showing significant improvements in all measured domains of quality. Williamsburg County First Steps will continue its efforts in providing high quality services to children and their families for all children to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.



**Programs Available to Williamsburg County Families through First Steps**  
Parent-Child Home Program  
Imagination Library  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Child Care Training  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4K



## By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	York County
Children Under Five	289,990	15,344
Children In Poverty	26.4	19%
3rd Graders Below Standard in Reading	21.1%	17.9%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	12.2%

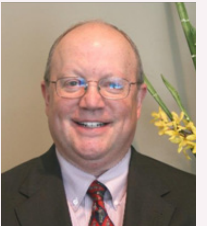
KIDS COUNT data provided by Children's Trust of South Carolina

- Since inception, York County First Steps has leveraged **\$4,633,327** from sources outside state government. **That's \$.70 for every dollar received.**
- **868 hours of support and guidance** were provided to 47 families in our Parents as Teachers Program.
- Childcare professionals received **346 hours of technical assistance** for early care best practices.
- Provided 144 rising kindergarten children with Countdown to Kindergarten services that provided **838 home and school visits.**
- **Total Children Served in FY16:**  
-191 children and families with intensive home visitation programs.  
-912 children indirectly impacted by assisting their childcare professional with direct technical assistance and/or high quality training.

York County First Steps  
410 East Black Street  
Rock Hill, SC 29731  
Phone: (803) 981-5780  
Fax: (803) 981-5784

Board Chair: Cindy Hunt  
chunt@rhmail.org  
[www.YCFirstSteps.com](http://www.YCFirstSteps.com)

### York County First Steps David Lisk Executive Director



I recently ran across an interesting quote from Dr. Alicia Lieberman of the Child Trauma Research Program of the University of California in San Francisco, "Often, the circumstances of a mother's life overwhelm her natural coping capacity. When you are bombarded by poverty, uncertainty, and fear, it takes a superhuman quality to provide conditions for a secure attachment." Research has shown that the positive attachment that forms between very young children and their parents has a direct and long lasting influence on how well the child will perform in school and function as an adult. Programs that foster parents developing positive attachments with their children are regarded as the most effective early childhood intervention strategies and this is where we see our most effective areas to expand services.

During this past year, a great deal of our effort was spent to lay the needed groundwork to bring the Nurse-Family Partnership Program to fruition. NFP will provide a significant expansion of our services for the very youngest children being born into vulnerable circumstances. The program enrolls at risk first time mothers prior to their 6th month of pregnancy and provides home visits until the child reaches two years old. One of the objectives of the program is to assist mothers in forming positive attachments with their newborn child. During this past year, we secured the needed funding to hire our Program Manager and our initial two Home Visitation Nurses. Our plan is to collaborate with our community partners to enroll first time at risk mothers in early fall of 2016. Long-term plans are to expand to provide the same services to Chester and Lancaster Counties along with all of York County with six additional nurses.

The NFP Program provides a key expansion to our interventions for vulnerable children and their families. The complement with our existing programs will provide a comprehensive array of interventions and offer "soft landings" for families as they exit from one program but still may need early services. Our focus continues to be helping families form positive attachments that prepare their children for success.



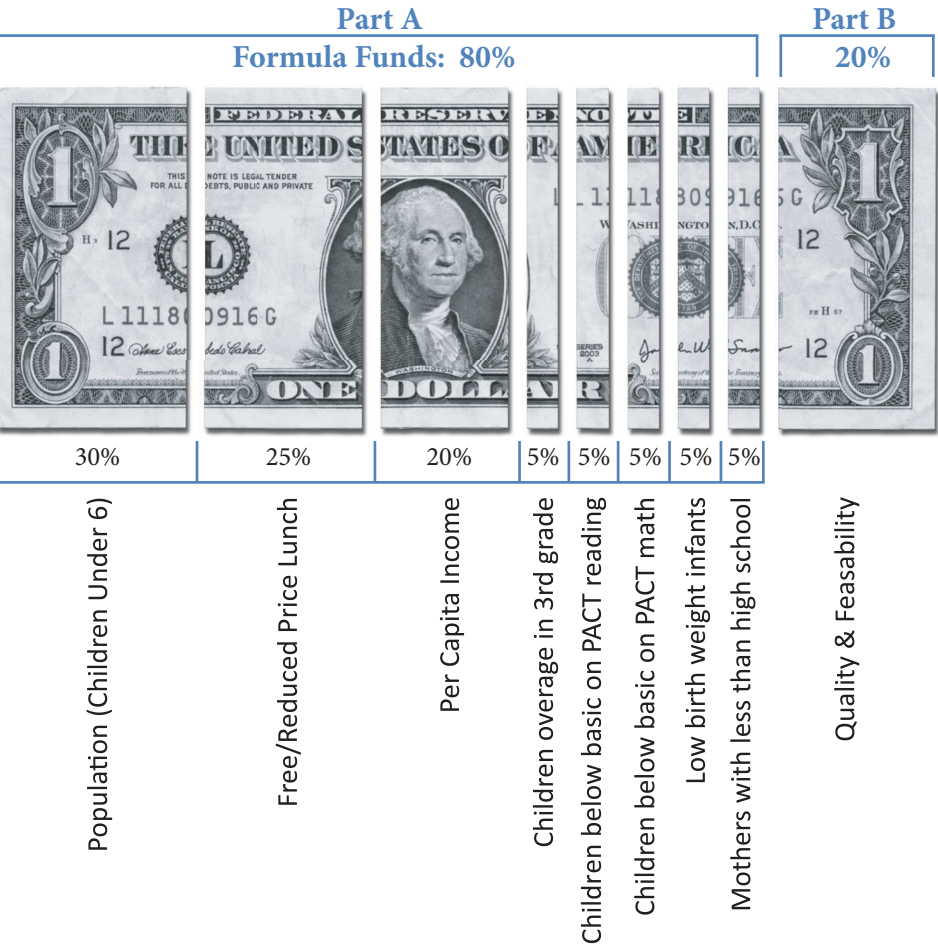
**Programs Available to York County Families through First Steps**

Parents as Teachers  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Quality Enhancement  
Child Care Training  
Countdown to Kindergarten

Childcare Vouchers  
BabyNet  
First Steps 4k  
Early HeadStart

Allocation of Resources

The First Steps Board of Trustees funds the operations of local First Steps Partnerships through an annual grant process. The amount of funding provided to each county is determined via the funding formula, which takes a variety of demographic and economic risk factors into account.



South Carolina's statewide public-private partnership continues to work on increasing school readiness outcomes for the state's young children.

2016 has been an important year for SC First Steps, with the initiation of Early Head Start services to 254 low-income infants and toddlers in 12 SC counties, the continued expansion of the First Steps 4K program and the addition of both technical assistance resources and new program funding for the agency's 46 local, non-profit First Steps Partnerships. Base funding for First Steps' smallest local partnerships has grown from \$138,000 to \$200,000 annually for FY17, allowing partnerships to both expand their service to children and families and to better fulfill the core functions detailed for them in Act 287 of 2014.

Among recent reforms about which we are especially proud is the creation of the First Steps Executive Directors' Leadership Council. This advisory body, comprised of all local partnership executive directors, is designed to mirror the committee structure of the State Board of Trustees and provide partnerships an active voice in shaping state-level policy. We are already seeing the benefits of this structure in the form of improved communication and buy-in.

Additional strategies that were implemented in the latter half of the year include the creation of state-local teams consisting of all First Steps' local, state and federally-funded programs which will meet periodically to coordinate services. Support to local partnerships in the area of nonprofit management was increased with the hiring of expert technical assistants and partnering with the SC Association for Nonprofit Organizations.

We are now planning to further expand the reach of the First Steps 4K program into underserved communities through both newly-created and newly-approved providers in areas of high need.

We are proud of the work underway in each of our counties and look forward to their continued success in the coming year. On behalf of South Carolina's 336,000 children under six, let me thank you for the role you play in making The Palmetto State a better place.

*Julia-Ellen C. Davis*

Julia-Ellen C. Davis  
Interim Director  
SC First Steps to School Readiness



## First Steps Legislative Goals

1. Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
2. Increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
3. Promote high quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
4. Provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
5. Mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.



